

punk planet

ISSUE #52 | NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2002 | \$4.95 US
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underground

The Kills | "Terrorism Trap" | Denali | the

Librarians



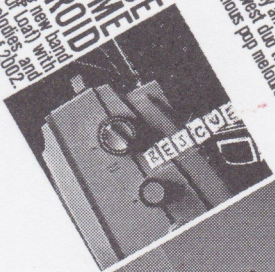
punk porn?



300

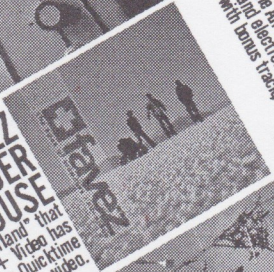
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PP52



"To oppose the policies of a government does not mean you are against the country or the people that the government supposedly represents. Such opposition should be called what it really is: *democracy*."

—**Michael Parenti**

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Planeteers

Daniel Sinker
editor and trash collector

Joel Schalit
Chris Ziegler
associate editors

Kyle Ryan
reviews coordinator

Leah Ryan
fiction editor

Shawn Kruggel
copyeditor

Jessica Hopper
media

Janice Dillard
subscriptions manager

Michael Coleman
art editor

Dan Sinker
Marianna Levant
Frol Boundin
Dustin Mertz
Michael Coleman
look & feel team

Jim Horwat
cover illustration

Trevor Kelley
Jenny Tatone
Will Tupper
Evan Johnston
Cameron Macdonald
Megan Shaw Prelinger

Aaron Shuman
David Ross
Alana Kumbier
Claire Podulka
George Sanchez
Mark Brown

Marni Cordell
Anjali Gupta
Kari Lydersen
Christopher Touchton
Greg Neate
Charlie Bertsch
contributing writers

Larry Livermore
Jessica Hopper
Sam McPheeters
Al Burian
Mimi Nguyen
Angel Page
Searah Deysach
Stacy Gengo
columnists

Eric Action
Brian Czarnik
Art Ettinger
Melissa Geils
Jason Gitzlaff
Tim Kuehl
Dan Laidman
Dana Morse
Bart Niedzialkowski
Charlotte Robinson
George Sanchez
Neal Shah

Andy Slob
Jillian Steinberger
Annie Tomlin
Amy Adoyzie
Vincent Chung
Jen Dolan
Patrick Sayers
Claire Sewell
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reviews

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the risks

intro52

We don't run the kind of magazine that steers clear of controversy. Over the years, we've tackled some topics that many other publications—both of the mainstream and the underground ilk—wouldn't touch. There have been a few times that people involved in non-editorial stuff—distributors, frequent advertisers, and the like—have expressed their doubts about a cover story (famously, we were told we were “committing suicide” by putting the sanctions against Iraq on the cover of PP30). But by and large the controversial subjects have meant more people buying the magazine, more people writing letters in thanking us for our honest reporting, and more ability to push the envelope next time. That's thanks to readers like you—folks that are willing to take the rough with the smooch.

For some reason, I don't see the same warm reception with this issue's cover story, “Pay To Cum” (dig the Bad Brains reference; we're not just being *totally* crass). In the story, *Punk Planet* associate editor (and all-around wunderkind who's *all over* this issue) Chris Ziegler investigates the recent surge of upstart DIY, punk-affiliated Internet porn sites. It's a touchy subject, even in this day and age of porn-positive feminism, and is sure to rankle feathers on many different sides of the issue.

But before you whip out your pens to

fire a letter off, why don't you give the article a read-through. Chris doesn't treat this like a titillating puff piece, sticking to the easy questions and the cheesecake shots. Instead, he asks the difficult questions a topic like porn deserves. But Chris also doesn't take the obvious “lefty” route either and just condemn the whole thing out of hand. “Pay to Cum” walks a tightrope, and I think Chris maneuvers his way over it quite adeptly, while managing to keep his sense of humor about him throughout. Give it a read, and then write your letters. We'll be happy to print them.

This issue is our longest ever, thanks in large part to the debut of a brand-new front section called Static (as well as the rebirth of our record reviews under the masterful hand of editor Kyle Ryan).

I couldn't be more excited about Static. For some time now I haven't been happy with the front of the magazine. Why start the magazine with the columns—the section with the least editorial oversight, the largest variation in writing quality, and the most personal subject matter? Is that really the best way to start the magazine, or are the columns there because that's where columns have *always* been put in magazines like this one?

Well, after tossing those questions to a bunch of other folks that work on the magazine, it was finally decided that there

might be a better way to start each issue of *Punk Planet*.

That better way has taken the form of a new section called Static. It's a collection of shorter pieces that mirror the type of stuff you'll find in the rest of the magazine: some music; some politics; some funny stuff; some serious stuff; some art; and a lot of good writing. It's almost like a mini-zine inside the magazine and goddamn I'm excited about it. (Of course the columns are still here, just a little further back than you're used to finding them. And I'm glad to report that the new leaner-meaner lineup is firing on all pistons this bi-month.)

Actually, I'm really excited about a lot of what's happening here at *Punk Planet*. The changes I've been talking about since the start of the year in these introductions are in full swing. Our office has moved (along with our PO Box and our phone numbers, so update your books); we're bringing in some new folks to help do some work around here; and we're bringing new stuff into the magazine (in addition to Static we've also added a new feature called Field Trip that's like a scene report not written by people's best friends, and a new DIY column, DIY Food). It's exhilarating to be involved in all of this on our end—hope it's good on your end as well. Thanks for sticking with us through all this transition, and enjoy the new read.

Have a great new year. See you in '03,

DAN

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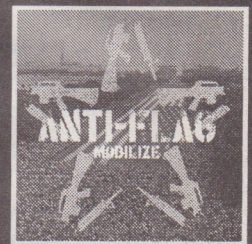
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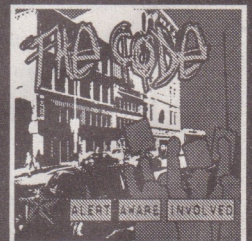
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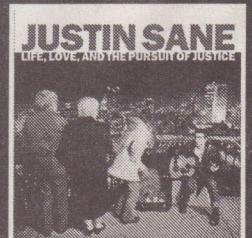
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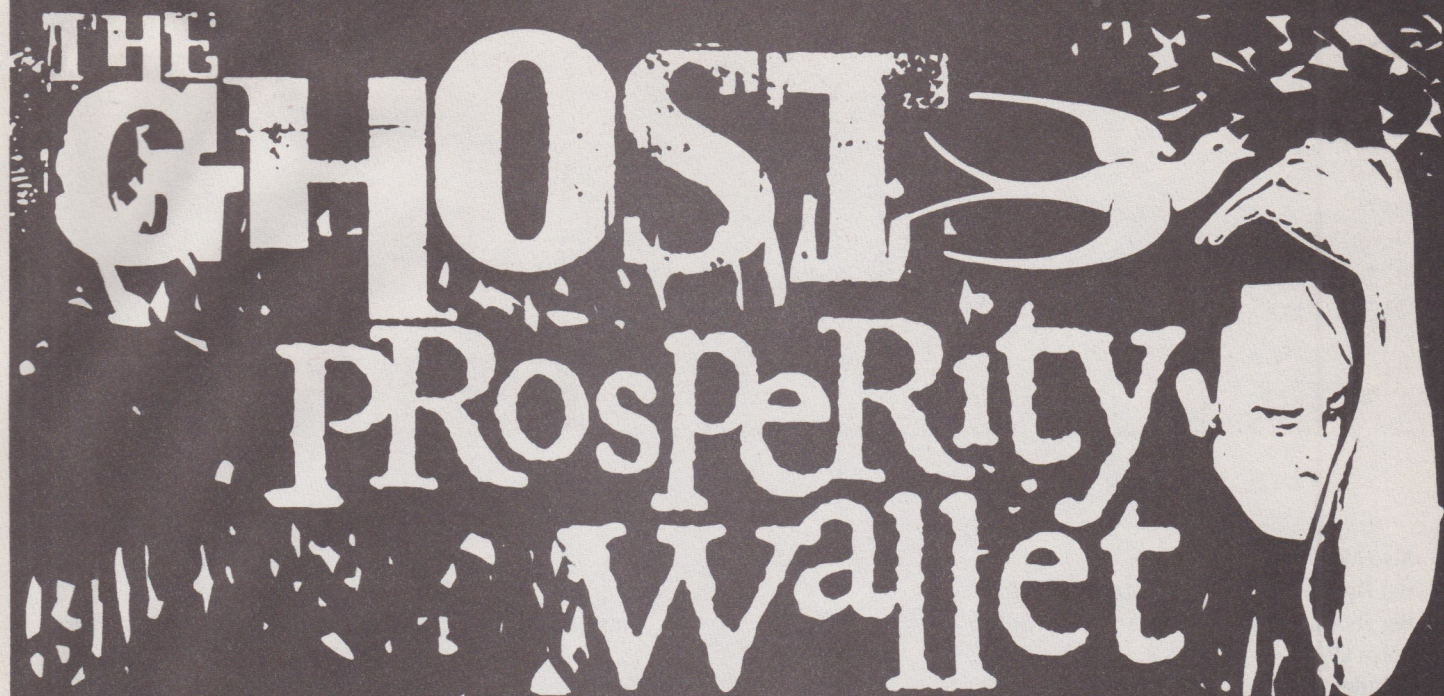


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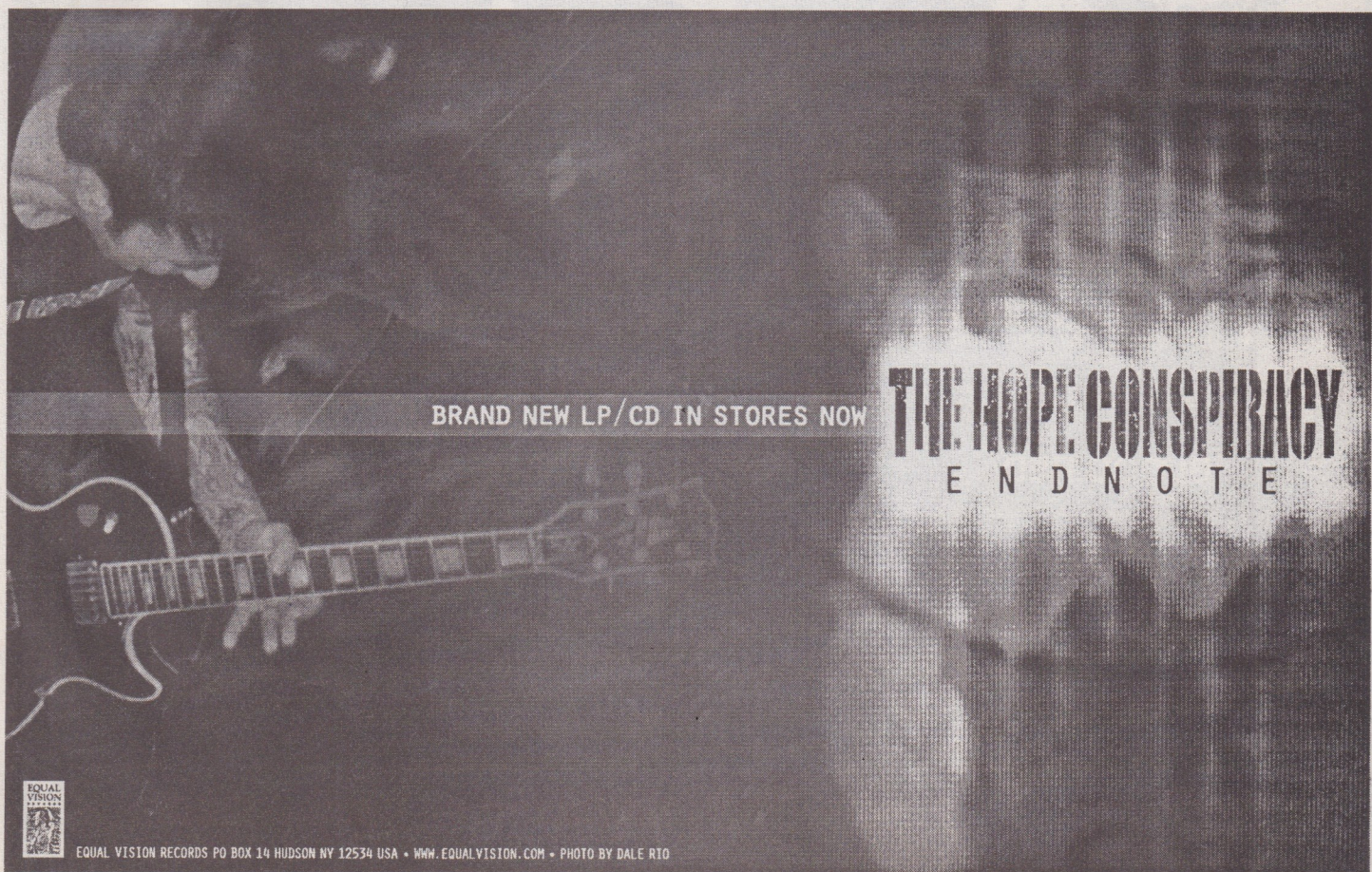
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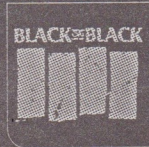


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mail52

► People and the Middle East conflict

Dear Dan—

Reading your intro to PP51 prompted me to dash off these few lines.

You really hit the nail on the head, nothing that "people" are the primary concern in the Middle Eastern conflicts. All too many American are oblivious to those realities, choosing, with the help of the government and "right" friendly media, to see the near-daily body counts as an abstract sport—where the "teams" are almost obscure to our masses as the chill of terror in war-torn lives.

Big props for promoting real-world coverage—so distant from the mainstream media sound-byte gloss-overs.

Keep up the great work & rock on,

Gary Erwin
Attica, New York

► Gender woes in the reviews section

Hey

This letter is regarding a review of our record, Sextionally, in the recent issue:

Mr. reviewer of our record—a 12" boner, huh? Is *that* all you got? I mean really, I've got more inches in rubber, fool!

While I appreciate the comparison to one of my favorite bands, Sonic Youth, with all honesty, we are not a two girl, one boy meat show. We are three women and we are all queer.

I appreciate the fact that maybe we did turn you on a little, maybe you really did get hard. It's pretty fucked up for you to have made us sound like ...well what we are.. a bunch of nympho's... (and while that may be true I'm the only one in the band who's after the dick every now and then) Just maybe look a little closer next time or hey, read who's in the fuckin' band!

I love this magazine, but sometimes I'm shocked at the little sexist slips that still exist. We're all working on our shit dude. But seriously, if you want to talk about your boner, e-mail me, don't let it relate to the rest of my band!

Sextionally frustrated,
Tami Hart

► Radio is the sound salvation

Hello,

I've been reading your magazine for several years now. I pick it up at a Wild Oats grocery store in Denver. I just wanted to make a comment regarding the use of radio for activism. People spend a lot of time on pirate radio and Internet stream-

ing and similar endeavors. It's all great and should be supported, but people concerned about social change shouldn't overlook the many local and national AM radio talk shows across the country. The ads are annoying, and the discussion is often very reactionary, but AM talk shows provide an opportunity for anybody to call in and share progressive views. These are several thousand watt stations reaching the "unconverted," often reaching multiple states. For the past three years, a handful of us have been calling into several AM talk shows in Denver and other locations through web broadcasts, and nationally-syndicated shows like Michael Medved and Dennis Prager. Rarely do we get blocked from the air, sometimes we get cut off, but mostly we've been able to have respectful debates with the hosts and get to mention alternative info sources for the audience.

Kind Regards,
Preston Enright

► A letter that reads like someone's thesis

Dear Editor,

I am writing in regards to Darren Cahr's column in Punk Planet 49 regarding Mariah Carey/Utilitarians vs. Entitlementists. I believe that Mr. Cahr's explanation of the Entitlement theory is askew. He states "Each

individual is their own king or queen in the most extreme version of this kind of thinking." This is not what Entitlement theorists meant. Entitlement means the individual right is supreme, but that doesn't mean people can trample other rights.

If we take the altruistic way of governing ourselves, that means any individual right we have may be taken away because it may be deemed as good for some, but doesn't help enough of society. To paraphrase an example Ayn Rand used to express this idea: if a beggar on the street asks for a dime, under altruistic laws, you would be required to give him that dime. There are others that need the dime and you, as the individual, must give it up for the good of society. Under Entitlement laws, the choice whether to give the man any money would be yours. So, if the altruistic laws were taken out of our government, what is the purpose of government if each man can control himself? Under these circumstances, I believe it is the job of the government to give impartial punishment to men who violate another's right. If it were up to each man or woman to dole out punishment, it would soon revert to a mafia-type system. There would be some who take control, demanding services or payment for providing protection, and threatening those who don't join their gang. Also, under Entitlement, people

would have the right to defend themselves, but may not do it rationally. As it is said, you can't shoot first and ask questions later. So, in order for the government not to step on a person's civil liberties, they should be a third party that only handles violation of man's right. In the end, I'm Entitlementist, not because I'm selfish, but because I believe people have the right not to be sacrificed for "society."

Sincerely,
Kimberly Simonetti
Hutchinson, Kansas

► Yet more Vagrant fun

Punk Planet,

I think in a way it is good that you did this article [Business as Usual? PP49] because the situation is so sad. The vast majority of people buying Vagrant releases won't be into punk rock once they finish college or take over the family business. In the near future you will see thousands of these stupid fucking discs in pawn shops and thrift stores.

I've been buying punk records since 1986 and I am so turned off by bands and labels who are greedy pigs. In a way it was stupid of myself to read the entire article and waste my time. We've seen it before and will probably see it again so I guess it does-

n't hurt to be informed.

Mr. Egan out to bank all he can right now 'cause all his trendy consumers are going to move on, and next year punk rock might not be "in". Should our civilization last another 50 years, I can see kids seeking out Minor Threat and Black Flag while the Vagrant bands remain a footnote on a Spin magazine web site.

Thank you,
Will Collins
Newark, Delaware

► Now we're blushing

Punk Planet—

I just wanted to write you a note thanking you for Jeff Guntzel's report from the West Bank ["Wave A White Flag" PP51]. That kind of on-the-scene reporting is what makes PP such an unusual and unique magazine. It's also the reason I buy it every issue. I know it's been rough for you this year money-wise (that extra buck isn't that much), but if it means still getting stuff like that story, it's worth it to me.

Thanks for all the hard work,
Jody Foster
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

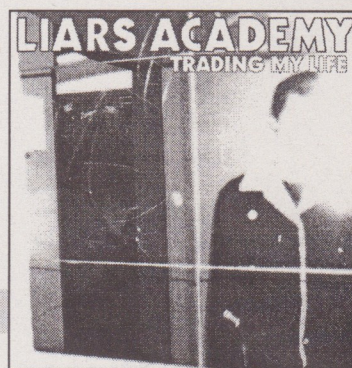
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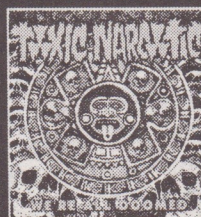
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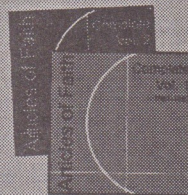
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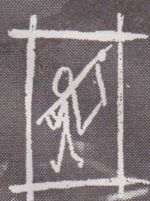


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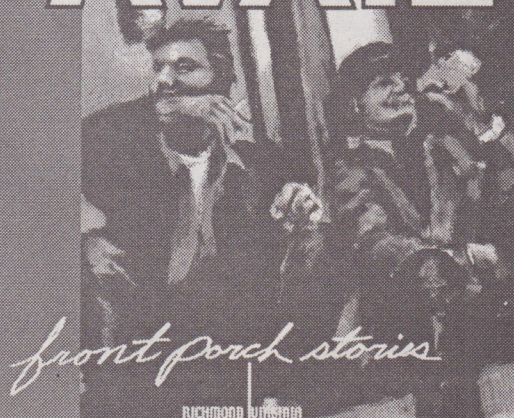
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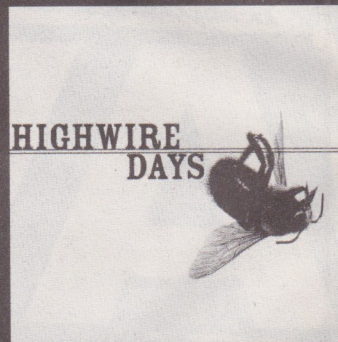
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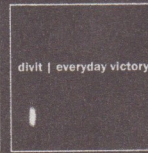
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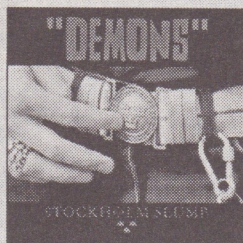
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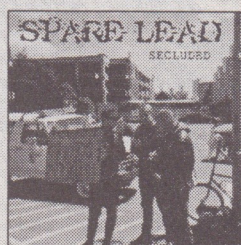
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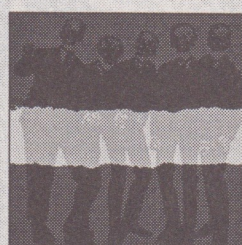
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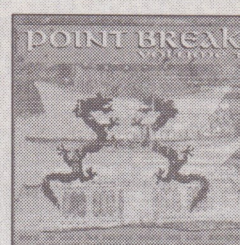
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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

"Hey Sisters Take a Stand"

IN A COUNTRY WHERE WOMEN ARE TREATED LIKE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS, PUNK SINGER INA LEADS A GIRL REVOLUTION.

Ina, lead singer in the Yogyakarta-based punk band Oposan Bangsat (in English, Oposan Bangsat roughly translates to "get fucked"), ties a red bandanna across her face and starts her motorbike with a single kick of her heavy black boot. I jump on the back and we take a wide curve across the street and head into the traffic flow. She's taking me to a vegetarian *warung* just out of town. This woman is by far the toughest chick I've come across in Indonesia.

As we dodge traffic and I watch her small hands swiftly change gears, my mind can't help but internally scream out "Yeah!" This is the first time since arriving in Indonesia two months ago that I've met a woman who openly revels in the kind of freedom so often reserved for males in this country. Being around her gives me a sense of power and free will that I haven't felt for months. I feel completely liberated by her.

There are many social and behavioral restrictions

on women in Indonesia, most of which are enforced and kept in place by societal pressure. Women are taught from a young age to be passive and submissive; that decision-making is a man's role, while a woman should strive to be an attractive and dedicated wife and mother. There is a well-known Javanese belief that states: if a man goes to heaven, his wife will follow, but if a man goes to hell, she must follow him there also. The belief runs deep: a woman's role—in life and after—is to serve her husband.

According to Ina, the inequalities that exist for women in Indonesia are often perpetuated under the guise of religion, and the force of the social pressure that keeps these beliefs in place cannot be underestimated. Young people in Indonesia are kept in check by their entire community, so rebelling from the socially accepted norm is often a brave and very isolating act. Hence, attitudes and

behavioral patterns can be slow to change.

Even within scenes where you would think that a rejection of "the system" would also include a rejection of achingly old and outdated attitudes toward women, sadly, this is often not the case. Men are much more predominant and outspoken than women within activist and socially progressive circles also.

Sitting at a low table on a bamboo floor in an outside hut at Milas (a place so amazing, I can physically feel the preconceptions I had begun to form about this country cracking under its weight), Ina tells me how much of the predominantly-male punk scene in Yogyakarta (or *Jogja*) is abusive toward the band, because they address issues that many in the scene are not prepared to confront.

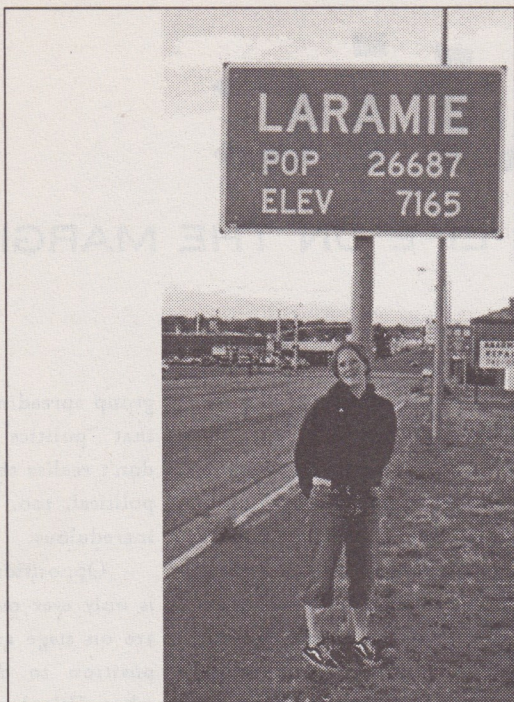
"They like to hold their power," she explains. According to Ina, many of the punks in *Jogja* have three main aims in life: "music, alcohol and freedom—and freedom to them means they're free to do anything they want." Some are politically aware and active, but there is a large

group spreading the message that "politics suck." "They don't realise that daily life is political, too," she tells me, incredulous.

Opposition to the band is only ever overt when they are on stage and not in the position to defend themselves. "It's always me that gets the harassment. They spit on me and pull up my T-shirt or try to grab my breast when I'm onstage. But when I get off the stage, they back off."

Ina tells me of one clash she had with someone that had harassed her on many past occasions. After having a screaming match with Ina, the skinhead turned to her boyfriend and started to pick a physical fight with him. "He didn't want to fight a girl because it would bring down his status to hit someone who was 'weaker.'" Ina pushed her boyfriend aside and smacked the guy in face. He disappeared pretty quickly.

Later, as we are drinking hot ginger tea, I am surprised to find out that three of the members of Oposan Bangsat are male. She tells me the guys in the band are great, that they have personally disowned the term "man" and have



"A Wasteland of the Airwaves"

AMERICAN LOW-POWER FM STRUGGLES TO TURN ON.

Where Kitsch Verbal lives, she says, radio is the next Wal-Mart. Laramie, Wyoming is hours from anywhere—her old band 800 Reasons was one of two female-fronted bands in the entire state—and pretty much the only music you'll ever hear is the bargain-bin equivalent of the big beige box stores ("I don't even listen to it," she says. "It makes me too sad"). She thinks a low-power FM (LPFM) station would give a community struggling with cultural isolation and the still-palpable aftershocks of the October 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard a voice all its own—but while starting a LPFM station is no longer illegal, explains Verbal, it's still not easy.

"The application window is open for five days and that's it, and the application is almost 30 pages long," she says. "For someone who's never had anything to do with radio before—I mean, I saw a need and I love music and I want people to hear this stuff—I feel so alone doing this. Am I the only one out there?" Verbal asks.

plans to make T-shirts that read "When will boys learn?"

Oposan Bangsat sings "Hey sisters take a stand / We are living in a man's land / Don't cry for protection / Don't flirt for attention / Hey sisters take a stand / Free yourself from society's hand / Vanity's a distraction / Life's not based on a man's attraction." (Lyrics by Beki.)

I ask Ina why she thinks more women don't speak out more often against their treatment.

"There is a culture in Indonesia of keeping personal stuff to yourself," Ina explains. If a man is violent toward his wife, she says, the woman is expected to deal with the trauma alone and not to tell anyone about it so as not to ruin his name or lower his social status. She tells me of a friend of hers from the punk scene who is

regularly beat up by her boyfriend. This fact is known by her friends, and sometimes even occurs in front of them, but nobody says anything about it because, says Ina, "unity is a very important thing in Indonesia. People who stand up for their opinion get thrown out".

As Ina tells me her stories—laughing broadly as she does—I can't help but marvel at the niche she has carved for herself within this society: as a woman that is outspoken and opinionated and (despite the random acts of sheepish abuse) as someone that actually gets away with it.

I pay for her drink, jump on her bike and raise my face to the wind as she negotiates us back out into the crazy traffic flow of Jogja city.

—Marni Cordell

"Is it On?"

SAN ANTONIO'S TACO LAND MARKS 40 YEARS OF ROCK 'N' ROLL.

San Antonio's infamous rock and roll Mecca Taco Land is rapidly approaching an impressive 40 year watermark—just long enough for most locals to take it for granted. Thankfully, the venue and its 70-plus year-old owner/operator Ram Ayala are still going strong. For generations of musicians, gigging at Taco Land has become a sort of unwritten rite of passage, which in turn makes Ram Ayala the most unlikely of gurus—half burly biker, half benevolent benefactor, and undisputed grandfather of the San Antonio music scene. Every musician and aficionado in San Antonio (and perhaps

Texas) has a favorite Taco Land story, and all revolve around Ram in some way, shape or form. He is, by deliberate understatement, quite a character.

Ram's living-room-sized bar is perennially surreal—an experiment in chaos theory gone affably awry, teetering precariously between an endless loop of *Repo Man* and *Up in Smoke*, with the intermittent (but choice) frame from *Taxi Driver* spliced in for good measure. On a slow night, you can all but hear fish breathing in the San Antonio River below, but on a Big Drag, Murder City Devils, or Belrays kind of occasion, you'll need a well-angled

Not at all, says Prometheus Radio Project (PRP) program coordinator Hannah Sassaman. The PRP grew out of a Philadelphia pirate—though “unlicensed” is a less loaded term—station in the late '90s and stands now as the spearhead to an organized and active LPFM movement. And, says Sassaman, anyone can get on the air—if they manage to follow the rules.

“It’s really difficult—it’s *labyrinthine*—but it’s possible,” she says. “People shouldn’t let confusion and feeling overwhelmed by paperwork get in the way of a getting a license to build.”

But two years after the January 2000 FCC reinstatement of a low-power licensing program last seen in 1978, the *Washington Post* reported that only six out of 3,400 applicants had actually made it on the air.

It’s not for lack of trying or even lack of support—a June survey found that 74 percent of Americans support legal LPFM, and nearly as many are dissatisfied with the state of nationwide radio. It’s just that the airwaves are pretty much sewn up—thanks to massive deregulation in 1996—and it’s tough to get the government to help peel them back open.

LPFM success, admits Sassaman, has been a sort of muted one. And she knows why it’s being drowned out: companies like

Clear Channel Communications, the flagship corporation out of a gang of four that own at least 60 percent of the American airwaves (before deregulation, there were over 5,100 independent station owners). The Wal-Mart analogy is exactly right, Sassaman says. Between shady payola practices, lack of local representation and continued expansion, the radio is only going to get blander: “They’re making a wasteland of the airwaves,” she says.

Across the border in Canada, there are over 500 licensed LPFM stations up and running; an application for an FM broadcast certificate is four pages long—English and French translations included. In Wyoming, it’s still a wasteland—at least until the next five-day filing window (of course, the FCC’s website “cannot advise as to when the next application filing window might be”). So now Verbal says she’s working on her music collection, feeling out community support, and waiting for her next chance—whenever that is. —Chris Ziegler

Contact Kitsch Verbal at 514 Russell, Laramie, WY 82070 or kitschverbal@hotmail.com. For information on LPFM or organizing against Clear Channel, contact *prometheus radio project* at PO Box 42158, Philadelphia, PA 19101, (215) 727-9620 or www.prometheusradio.org.

crowbar to venture five feet past the front door.

To the virgin eye, a once over of Taco Land by day is more likely to spark a change of plans than a ballad, though the Dead Milkmen (among others) managed to pull one off. The venue is flanked by an automotive shop and a large patio, liberally sprayed with graffiti and inhabited by the sprawling remains of a decrepit BBQ pit. But as the harsh light of day ebbs, such relics are washed in a blanket of softening darkness, and the venue begins to exude an odd but undeniable allure that falls somewhere between an impromptu soup kitchen and a backstage gathering at CBGB’s.

Perhaps it is the low-key nature of the setting, but both the place and owner

seem to abet acts of harmless absurdity including a highly contagious and situationally-induced form of Tourette’s Syndrome. Yet things rarely get out of control. Ram is a patriarch who rules his domain with a velvet fist cast in iron and the occasional well-aimed cue ball. For the most part, indigents, punks, and stray yuppies mix with relative ease in Taco Land’s sub-zero succor.

Neither owner nor regular clientele suffer fools lightly. Bands who overstep their boundaries via crappy attitudes, complicated set ups, multiple roadies, large guest lists, and/or other irritating demands are turned out on their not so proverbial ass faster than Ram can rattle off his beer menu. (“Yellow or brown, pussy?”) Taco Land is a

music venue, plain and simple—a worthy pit stop on the road less traveled.

Taco Land is not for the weak of will or the thin-skinned. Ram is more likely to fuck with you than kiss your ass for a tip. But remember to just smile and take it—it usually

means he likes you. The proper-yet-nonsensical response to “Hey, pussy,” is “Is it on?” And please, for the love of god, do not ask the man for a glass of water. —Anjali Gupta

Find Taco Land at 103 W Grayson St. San Antonio, TX 78212

Politically Direct: MIDDLE EASTERN MEDIA RENEGADE DAOUD KUTTAB

In late April there was a story about the king of Jordan in *The Economist* that didn’t please the Jordanian government.

“*The Economist* only sells about 100 copies in Jordan,” says Daoud Kuttat, one of the Middle East’s most well-known and respected journalists, on a recent visit to Chicago. “So the censors

flipped through the magazine, saw the article they didn’t like, and took scissors and cut out that one article.”

Kuttat has built his controversial career around subverting blatant censorship of this type, which he says occurs in almost every Middle Eastern country. The keystone of Kuttat’s efforts has been the Internet. Just as the Zapatistas

Read All Over

BOOKING THE FUTURE 500

Ada Rivera grew up in Chicago's rough Humboldt Park neighborhood watching her father beat up her mother and youth in gangs kill each other and go to prison. She felt disenfranchised and lonely, and sometimes kids made fun of her because of her prosthetic leg.

But with the help of hip-hop and the supportive environment at Pedro Albizu Campos alternative high school, Rivera found her own strength and began to organize to help her community.

"I saw her make her way through the crowd with determination in her stride and fiery passion in her eyes," is how Jennifer "J-Love" Calderon describes her first meeting with Rivera at the Hip Hop as a Movement conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

Rivera is one of the people and organizations profiled in the *Future 500*, a handbook on youth activism that depicts a scrappy, gutsy, grassroots, and extremely diverse youth organizing scene blossoming around the nation under the radar of major non-profit organizations and foundations.

The book, published by The Active Element Foundation, was written and compiled by a large collective of various young activists and journalists including Jee Kim, editor of the post-9/11 tome



and other revolutionary movements in Latin America have used modern cyber technology to gain support around the world, Kuttab and his colleagues have utilized the Internet to promote free press and get the truth out both within the Middle East (in Arabic language) and to the international community.

Kuttab's main venture at the moment, the Arabic Media Internet Network (AMIN), is basically an electronic newsstand offering most major papers and other news outlets from the Middle East online.

"By physically combining all the Arabic wires and

news services in one Internet location, you basically overcome the censorship problem," he said. When people saw the gap in *The Economist*, many automatically went to Kuttab's website.

"People saw a hole in one page, and went to the Internet site and saw the story the censors didn't want them to see," Kuttab explained. "People printed the article, photocopied it and sent it to friends all over. So instead of the usual 100 copies of *The Economist* being sold, thousands of people saw the article. The end result was completely opposite from what the censors wanted to do."

Another World is Possible and William Upski Wimsatt, author of *Bomb the Suburbs* and *No More Prisons*.

Future 500 has a three-pronged mission, according to contributor Emily Kramer.

"One, it helps funders identify youth organizers and groups that haven't received funding before," explains Kramer, 20, a student at the New School in Manhattan and member of a political band called The Syndicate. "Secondly, it gives people already involved in organizing a consolidated, thorough guide to young people in activism. And finally, people who had no idea this world of organizing was out there can pick it up and say, 'I can do this!'"

The book includes 25 profiles of youth like Rivera who have overcome challenging circumstances to become activists and community leaders. The profilees range from college activists to young working parents raising several kids while fighting the system. Along with the individual profiles, the book serves as a comprehensive listing of scores of youth-oriented activist groups throughout the country. Any group which is not already listed is invited to post their information on the *Future 500* web site, www.Future500.com.

"Just because the first three groups you called are stuck up, that's no excuse for your lazy ass to sit around smokin' weed and talkin' 'bout the Illuminati or sipping on Starbucks complaining how apathetic people are," insist the book's editors in the introduction. "If you're down to put in work somewhere, some group needs you. This is a book about possibilities." —Kari Lydersen

The Future 500 is available for \$12 from New Mouth From the Dirty South books P.O. Box 19742 New Orleans, LA 70179-0742 www.newmouthfromthedirtysouth.com

Kuttab's reporting and his advocacy of free speech has earned him accolades from the international journalism world, including a Press Freedom Hero award from the International Press Institute and frequent exposure in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and other international media. It has also earned him the ire of Middle Eastern governments and political figures across the board.

Though he is Palestinian and supports a Palestinian state, Kuttab's allegiance is to the truth and a free and independent press above all else, a fact that alienates him to some

extent from Palestinian and leftist movements both in the Middle East and in the US. He also comes off as much more supportive of the US government than most of his countrymen, largely because of what he sees as America's relative protection of freedom of speech. Though does have his own criticisms of American coverage of the Middle East and the current conflict in particular, especially when it comes to the US government's attempts to censor the Saudi satellite station Al Jazeera after the September 11 attacks.

"America is a wonderful country, but it makes certain assumptions that in times of

war the media must follow the suit of the government," he explains. "And most journalists do that. But a professional journalist who is not American is not obliged by this unwritten code that they follow the American government. You can't say American press was objective in covering the Afghanistan war and you can't expect it to be. But you can't expect the rest of the world to follow suit in the way they cover the war. To attack Al Jazeera as America did is ridiculous. Yes they showed the Bin Laden interview—who wouldn't? If ABC had gotten that interview, they would have shown it. It was a very hypocritical complaint."

Kuttab notes that far from being a radical Islamic voice, Al Jazeera is actually a Western-style media outlet

founded by Arab journalists who had worked for the BBC, originally with funding from a Saudi television station called Orbit.

"Three months after they were established, they ran into a story that wasn't very pleasant to the Saudis," Kuttab says. "As professional journalists, they didn't censor themselves—they ran this story against the Saudi government. The Saudis weren't very happy, they pulled the funding."

Just as Al Jazeera has persevered, so has Kuttab's dogged pursuit of reporting the truth on the Internet.

"You often hear that this is a nice idea but how many people in the world really have Internet access?" he asks, rhetorically. "My response to that is two-fold. One, almost everybody has access to Internet cafes. There is one street in Jordan [in the uni-

versity city of Irbid] that has entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* for having 130 Internet cafes on one street. And most people think of the Internet only as a tool for end-users—if you don't have a computer, the Internet doesn't mean anything to you. I argue the Internet is more than a medium, it is also a means of com-

munication. If I create a web site, all I need is one person to have access to it to circulate the news to a whole community. If only 20 journalists have access to the Internet, they publish the news from my web site in their radio stations and papers and it reaches thousands of people."

—Kari Lydersen

Sonic Assault

OAKLAND'S FROM MONUMENT TO MASSES PUT SAMPLES, JAZZ, AND REVOLUTION INTO THE PUNK ROCK BLENDER.

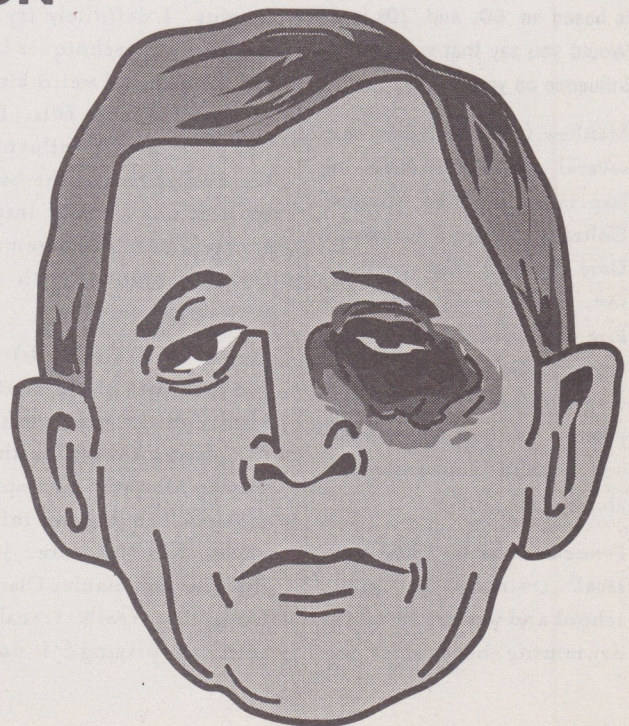
From Monument to Masses project an image of a more utopian universe by incorporating a variety of genres that derive themselves from cultural resistance into their instrumental songs. Samples from liberation movements throughout history punctu-

ate their audio-rebellion tunes in a manner that does not come off as holier-than-thou. Through savvy mixing of sounds and ideas, the band manages to combine the best aspects of protest music while continuing to push the musical envelope into the future.

GALLERY: RE: THE_OPERATION

ICONS BY PAUL CHAN

"Based on a set of icons that depict members of the Bush administration as wounded soldiers in the war against terrorism, RE:THE_OPERATION explores the sexual and philosophical dynamics of war through the lives of the members as they physically engage each other and the "enemy". RE:THE_OPERATION exists as a single channel video and a set of desktop replacement icons for MAC and PC from www.nationalphilistine.com/operation."





'PARTY CITY!'

MISS PUSSYCAT, THE QUEEN OF PUPPETLAND

Geniuses never get discovered until they're dead and rotting. Maybe it's human nature to look for inspiration in the past, not the present. But somehow we got lucky enough to find some real-live inspiration in New Orleans' Miss Pussycat, the Leonardo DaVinci of the marionette set.

Miss Pussycat grew up in secluded Antlers, Oklahoma, and got her start as a puppeteer with the Southern Baptist Church, but after a few trips by herself to Europe and South America (during which she saw her first ever WALK/DON'T WALK sign) she got the fuck out of Antlers, rolled into New Orleans, and started becoming a legend.

She is the co-owner Pussycat Caverns, the only all-ages DIY female-run club in the South; has toured her all-puppet band Flossie and the Unicorns; met (and married) swamp-y superstar Mr. Quintron; started her own designer clothing company and became president of Rhinestone Records. And 38 puppet theaters and 29 tours later, she's made her first full-length all-puppet Christmas movie masterpiece, *North Pole Nutria!*

How did growing up in Antlers make you who you are today?

God, I don't know . . . I don't want to sound like that song, "I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee!" I grew up in a one-stoplight town—actually a one-stoplight county—on the ranch that my dad grew up on, which was down the dirt road from the ranch that my mom grew up on. When I was 15, I sold my horse and all of my cows—my granddad gave each of his grandchildren a baby calf for Christmas each year—and I went to London. Whoopee! Party city! Let's just say I bought a lot of records!

It seems like some of your music is based on '60s and '70s jazz. Would you say that was a large influence on your band?

Matthew (guitar): I have, for several years, listened to jazz musicians like Mingus, Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Dave Brubeck, George Benson, and Lou Donaldson. I love the sounds, and I love it rhythmically, but I don't think it has influenced my guitar playing. It's just affected the way I think subconsciously about music.

Francis (drums): I had classical training in grade school and was drawn to jazz drumming because it was

more complex and challenging. I definitely try to emulate jazz techniques like ghost notes and weird kinds of patterns and fills. I'm not sure if that influences the overall feel of the band or not, but I try to intersperse and amalgamate these techniques with my rock tendencies.

Sergio (bass/keyboards): If you look back at the musical history of the bass, most of the players known for their playing are jazz and improv players. The biggest influences for me are Jack Passorus and Stanley Clarke. Does that really translate into my playing? I don't

know. But just the idea of really trying to push yourself with the bass and trying to come up with something a little bit more innovative definitely is there. It's also good to know when to step back and not be all super flashy. I like to take the ideas of instrumental music from jazz because unlike most modern pop and rock music, jazz musicians didn't have to rely so heavily on great vocalists. If you look way back, people look to great trumpet or horn lines as being the most communicative and expressive parts of the song. I think that's something we're trying to do

with our instrumentation or samples or whatever.

But in a more rock-based sense?

Sergio: Yeah. Absolutely.

Matthew: I think as far as the jazz influence is concerned, hip-hop has also played a strong role in that so many jazz drummers and bassists have been sampled over the years. So in listening to hip-hop growing up, we were listening to great jazz, funk, and soul drummers and bassists, but we didn't know it.

Sergio: Even in rock, jazz players had a large influence as well. Rock has its roots in the blues, which has its roots in jazz

Do you feel church was a weird introduction to puppetry?

No, I think church was the perfect place to be introduced to puppets. Church is probably the only place that a little kid can be introduced to doing puppet shows. We had to practice really hard and we even went on tour.

How long do your puppet shows usually take to write, record, and mix?

Maybe a month to get my ducks in a row. I don't like conflict, so I just naturally write these stories where everything gets better and better. You have to have something bad happen or it is not very interesting, but I don't want anything bad to happen to the puppets and their magical little world. It's tricky!

What made you decide to settle in New Orleans?

Mardi Gras! Floats, pirates and marching bands! Airbrushed acrylic nails, french fry po boys, and all the people driving down the street without any tires on their car!

What's your favorite tourist attraction?

My top three are Rock City in Chattanooga, Tennessee; the Snowball Cafeteria inside the Mammoth Caves in Kentucky; and all of Branson, Missouri! Jim Stafford's show in Branson is the best—he has glow-in-the-dark ballet dancers in his show!

What's so great about Branson?

It's like a rave for people over 60!

North Pole Nutria obviously had an enormous amount of your time

and it all comes from basically great African American music.

As far as being influenced by hip-hop, it is kind of evident that you guys do sampling. When did you decide that was how you would express your political ideology as opposed to having it come off in the lyrics?

Sergio: It comes from the idea of trying to disassociate the lyrics and politics from us as individuals. People talk about a band like Rage Against The Machine and they say "Oh Zach has some really great lyrics." They'll say the same about U2, "Oh, Bono writes some really positive . . ." That's not really our

thing. We have a collective voice when we're doing From Monument To Masses, so one of the easiest ways around it is to speak through our instruments. There are a lot of great things out there that a lot of rock audiences aren't exposed to in terms of People's movements abroad, locally, and historically, which I think is just a great idea to bring to a rock context through samples.

—Greg Neate

Contact FMTM at: 3015 Myrtle St. #3 Oakland, CA, 94608. Their website is www.monument-masses.com. Their self-titled CD is available from Dim Mak records www.dimmak.com

invested in it. Between the set changes and the video editing and everything else, how long did it take?

Oh my God, it took almost a year, from writing the script to the final editing. When we were editing, Rick Delap [director], Tim Watson [editor] and I had to wear special jogging suits—like western jogging suits with fringe on the sweat shirts and little plastic multi-colored beads on the fringe. I listened to Christmas music every day for four months, to get in the appropriate mood. Rick got really sick of it. But we were shooting these snow scenes in 80-degree weather!

The movie has amazing props. Were the houses really made out of gingerbread?

Yeah! I baked 27 different gingerbread buildings. There were bags of candy canes and spice drops all over the house! And piles of powdered sugar everywhere! One night I was up late baking these buildings and then I went to bed—I was so tired. Then something bit my toe! Then another bite! I got up and looked under the covers and there were fire ants in my bed! I guess all the sugar made them want to move in.

So what is the next over-the-top thing you would like to do?

I want to have my own theater in Branson, Missouri!

— Christopher "Vice Cooler" Touchton

More information about North Pole Nutria is online at

www.eccentricneworleans.com/north_pole.htm

Writing for change:

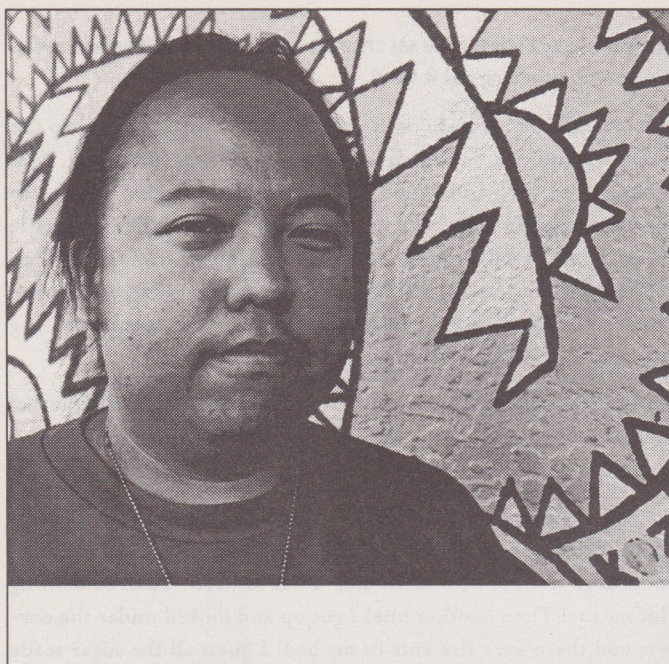
RABBI MICHAEL LERNER'S *TIKKUN* MAGAZINE IS WORKING TO CREATE A JEWISH VOICE IN AMERICA THAT CALLS FOR AN END TO THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

"Michael Lerner has found God, and he wants other alienated progressive Jews to find God, too," begins a hilariously critical Kirkus Review of Lerner's benchmark tome, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*.

While the activist-turned-free-market-Rabbi has raised more than a few eyebrows with his religious proselytizing—"there's nothing wrong with free trade and a free market, as

long as they operate within the context of a world governed by God," he wrote after the WTO demonstrations in Seattle—few progressives could argue with Lerner's recent efforts to transform the community formed around his magazine, *Tikkun*, into an





Waking up with the House on Fire

HONEY BEAR RECORDS GOES UP IN SMOKE.

"There comes a point," says Lance Hahn, on the phone from the Austin, Texas, video store where he works, "where there's nothing you can do about it. And so it's just sort of hilarious—sitting there in a parking lot with all my neighbors, watching our shit burn up."

On the last Tuesday in July, a four-alarm apartment fire—possibly set by a first-floor resident with a history of run-ins with other tenants (at press time, an investigation was ongoing) gutted the Trestles of Austin complex on Clayton Lane, injuring one firefighter and causing over \$800,000 worth of damage.

Hahn, the longtime guitarist and singer for seminal-by-now band J Church and the man behind Honey Bear Records and Distro, lost everything. Six thousand of his own records, all the Honey Bear pressings, his guitars, his four-track and CD recorder, all his master tapes—*everything*. He had to climb out a third story window with nothing but the clothes he was wearing when the fire spread to the stairwell.

"I was at home, playing on my four-track, demo-ing stuff for our next record," he says. "I had the AC on and the headset and I didn't even smell smoke. Then I heard pounding on the floor,

alternative to AIPAC, self-proclaimed as "America's pro-Israel lobby" and love-it-or-leave-it defender of the atrocious policies of Ariel Sharon.

If Lerner's current campaigns—such as a drive for city councils to pass Middle East Peace Initiatives, and a call for a Middle East Peace Teach-In for Congress in April 2003—seem a bit nutty, and his call for a "nonviolent intifada" verges on paternalism, his efforts to sort out the tangle of identities and historical burdens at the heart of the conflict is worthwhile.

So what if Lerner's bio bears more testimonials from self-help gurus like Ram Dass, Ken Wilber, Dean

Ornish, and Andrew Wilber than from religious authorities or progressive activists? So what if his faith in political change as a religious matter—his faith that God is on the side of "love, caring, ethics, and ecological sensitivity, as well as awe and wonder and a celebration of creation"—leaks the softheaded feelgoodyness and liberal arrogance of the Clinton era, (during which Lerner gained a special prominence)? So what if his aggressive theologizing—revealed when he prefaces statements, "whether you *think* you believe in God or not"—may ultimately be part of the problem, in a world riven by what

Tariq Ali has called "the clash of fundamentalisms"? In the world where people live, make political choices, and all too many die, Lerner is throwing *Tikkun's* weight against state policy, calling for "an immediate end to the occupation and to all acts of terror by both sides", while declaring that the Bush administration's latest plan "offers nothing to the Palestinians . . . but plenty for the terrorists."

The effort to create a Jewish voice in America that calls for an end to the Israeli occupation means discussing the conflict with a greater degree of complexity than it typically receives in the main-

stream American press. As Lerner notes in his latest *Tikkun* statement, reporting the response of Palestinians to his call for nonviolence, "The only time you hear about our [Palestinian] non-violent actions is when some of the internationals come here, stand with us, and get fired upon, and then newspapers report on it, because their injuries are 'important' whereas ours mean nothing to the people in Israel or the West." The unflinching savviness of such writing makes *Tikkun* worth a skeptical bimonthly read on this side of the Atlantic.

—Aaron Shuman

Tikkun is online at www.tikkun.org

looked out the window and saw flames going by."

Hahn made it to the second-floor and then jumped down to the parking lot, joining a crowd of about 100 ("My apartment was all blue flames," he says). Nobody had any insurance, and that's where the "hassles" started, he says.

"Everything's going to be chaos," he says. "I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for the next few things coming out [on Honey Bear]. And as for the band—well, the equipment wasn't there or anything, but all the demos for the next record and all the reel-to-reel tapes are gone."

A few people have offered to organize benefit shows for him, he says—he laughs a little at the idea of his own personal benefit show, but he hasn't exactly said no yet, either. And picking up where the Red Cross left off, both Vagrant and Alternative Tentacles both sent big boxes of CDs and shirts—they said he could sell anything he didn't need, he says, in case he needed the money (and in case he wasn't planning on wearing Dashboard Confessional shirts for the rest of the summer, either). Right now, he's just trying to start over again.

"We'll see what happens when I start writing the next record," he says. "And I'm definitely getting renter's insurance. But I've been through a tidal wave and an earthquake. I feel like I've got fire out of the way now, too." —Chris Ziegler

Contact Lance Hahn at honeybearrecords@hotmail.com.

Dead Men Walking

A LAME-DUCK GOVERNOR LOOKS TO SAVE HIS LEGACY BY SAVING THE LIVES OF 159 CONDEMNED MEN.

"The worst case scenario?" Rachael Dietkus asks. "The worst case scenario is that when the new governor takes office, one of the first things he'll do is execute someone."

Almost three years into a moratorium on state executions in Illinois, the scenario Dietkus outlines could become a reality in January when the state bids goodbye to its controversy-laden current governor and swears in one of two men, both of whom promise to "get tough on crime."

Activists like Dietkus, program director for the

Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty, are looking to outgoing governor George Ryan to act as an angel of mercy for the 159 men and women currently on Illinois' death row.

Ryan—a Republican who rose to prominence when he enacted the moratorium in 2000—may make their dreams come true. After receiving 157 clemency petitions (that's just two shy of every single person on death row), Ryan announced that he was considering commuting the death sentences to life in prison with-

out parole. And not for one or two people—for everyone.

"I don't know how I could pick and choose," Ryan explained in a September statement. "That's why I have to determine whether it's going to be for everybody or for nobody."

Ryan's announcement is unprecedented, says Dietkus. So much so that no one knows what might happen if he does decide for commutation.

"Because this has never been done on such a grand scale, even the lawyers involved don't know exactly how it will play out," Dietkus says. "There are a lot of hunches right now, hunches and wishful thinking. But we're hopeful Ryan will make the right decision and recognize that all of the men and women on death row have been sentenced under a deeply flawed system."

The hunches and wishes will continue through the fall and into winter as Ryan waits until the last minute to announce his decision.

"He will wait until there's no chance for the legislature to possibly debate it," Dietkus predicts.

If limiting debate is at the forefront of Ryan's list, it's because he isn't the most popular man in Springfield right now, both because of his un-GOP aversion to killing people and because of the fact that he's been dogged by a bribery scandal that has 86'd any further political career for the first-term governor.

The cynical among us (among which I count myself) might say that Ryan sees one last chance to secure a legacy

for himself that goes beyond being mired in controversy over what he did when he was Secretary of State. After all, people are already talking Nobel Prize.

But the cynical among us aren't sitting on death row, where political machinations mean lives. According to Dietkus, the men and women on Illinois' death row are nervous. Their once-bleak future suddenly looks uncertain, and no one can tell them what's going to happen.

"It's a terribly troubling situation for the men and women on death row," says Dietkus. "On one hand, that's the legal process to deal with. You have to go through the many legal channels which can include a lengthy appeals process. Once you run out of appeals and there is a moratorium in place but still a death penalty on the books, what happens next? For the people that have claims of innocence, who knows what's going to happen to them. Their outcome is just as unpredictable as the system that put them there. Some are worried that if they're not on death row, people won't pay attention to them anymore and their cases will lose steam."

However, they're not so worried that they won't pin their hopes on a one-termer with nothing to lose.

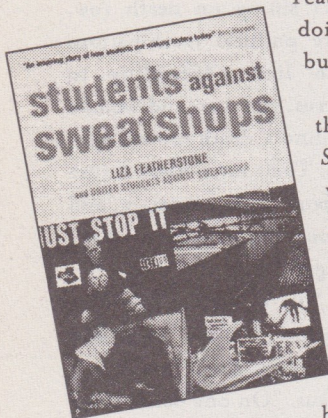
—Daniel Sinker

The Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty is online at www.icadp.org. They urge you to Contact Governor Ryan and let him know that you support commutation of all death sentences. E-mail him at governor@state.il.us or call 217-782-0244.

Building Solidarity

AUTHOR LIZA FEATHERSTONE TALKS ABOUT THE ANTI-SWEATSHOP MOVEMENT.

"A woman who was very active in the '60s antiwar movement called me up the other day after reading the book," recalls Liza Featherstone, "and she said, 'They are doing exactly what we *never* did, which is to build institutions.'"



Featherstone is clearly excited about the student activism she describes in *Students Against Sweatshops*. It's an unconventional book, combining her outsider's perspective as a journalist with documents created by the student activists themselves. But she didn't feel compromised by the collaboration. And the anti-sweatshop movement's willingness to think long-term is a big reason why.

Featherstone didn't feel pressured to mold her prose to the movement's party line because there isn't one. With its establishment of a national office in Washington DC, United Students Against Sweatshops made a sharp break with the personality-driven activism that undermined previous student movements.

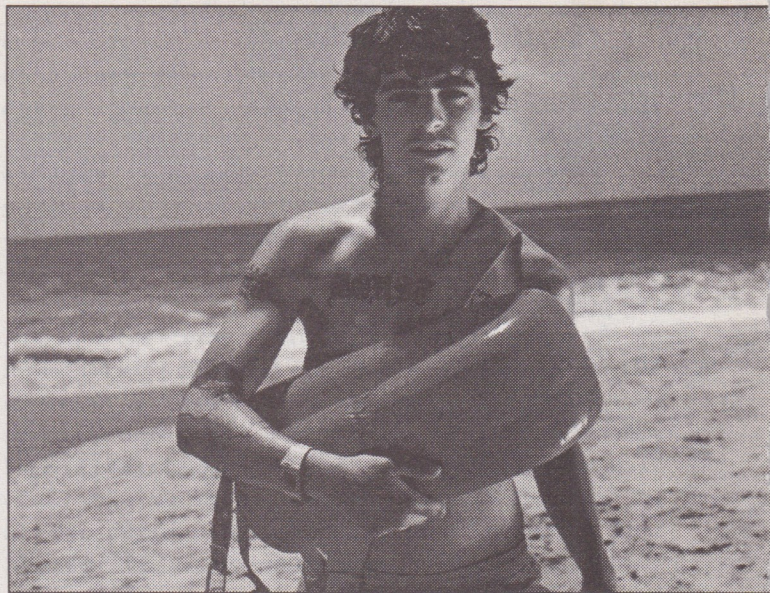
"I think there's a way in which radicalism now, among activists, is almost taken for granted," says Featherstone. "The world we are looking at is a very radical reality: dire misery caused by global capitalism, total environmental crisis. Kids don't spend a lot of time worrying about who has the more radical position."

But Featherstone is quick to point out that this pragmatism is more than a reflection of the student activists' environment. "It's also a reaction against previous Left formations. There is a feeling that people in the past used to spend an endless amount of time in ideological debate, purging each other, forming tendencies with new names."

Perhaps most refreshing about Featherstone's (and the anti-sweatshop movement she documents) approach is a belief not in top-down decrees, but in shared struggles and common ground.

"It's not about boycotting clothes because they're made in sweatshops. The two most common reactions that I've gotten in talking about this book are either sympathetic — 'Which clothes shouldn't I wear?'—or hostile—'Isn't this a stupid, well-intentioned thing that is going to cause workers to lose their jobs?' And those are both based on the fundamental assumption that, by raising questions about sweatshops, you're telling people what to buy or *not* to buy. But joining with workers in third-world countries in solidarity is much more complicated and involves much more work than us simply buying clothes that make us feel better."

—Charlie Bertsch



GALLERY: JD's Lesbian Calendar

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JD SAMSON AND CASS BIRD

British Invasion

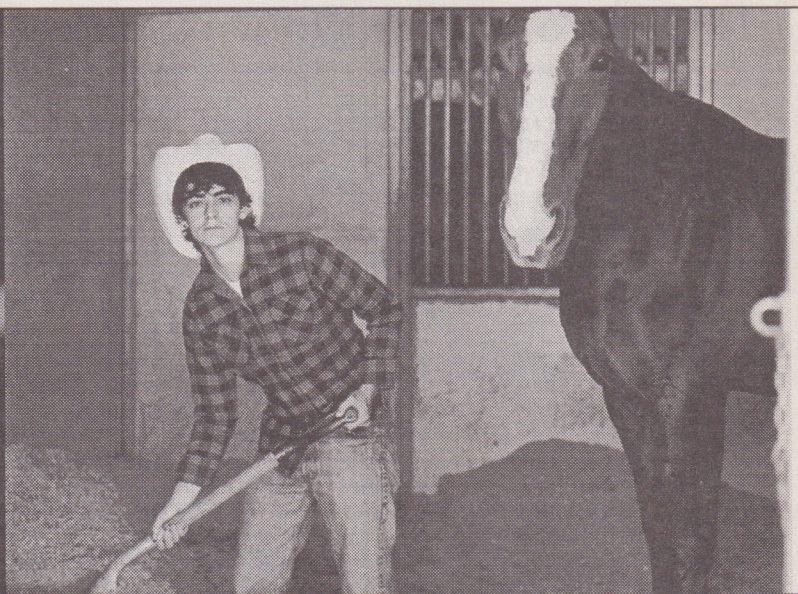
ARMED WITH JUST A 7" AND A DREAM, ENGLAND'S LUBE PACKS THEIR BAGS AND TRAVELS TO THE STATES.

Lube is one of those bands that people can't quite get. Or so lead singer Simon RD Flynn says in a late-night (fucking time zones) call from his home in Bristol, England. Case in point: they just finished a show with a bunch of nu-metal bands. And Lube, no matter how much makeup you want to smear over their eyes and how much distortion you want to smear over the guitars, was not meant to play with nu-metal bands.

"We were in a band called the Spasmodics in the '90s and that was sort of Doors-y-Led

Zeppelin," Simons says. "I know . . . I know . . . we realized we stretched things too far. And then we went from this basic Stooges-y sort of thing, to getting really into Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, to starting to play stuff that had strange rhythms, playing around with swing and that kind of thing. And that's what we've carried on doing."

Their debut 7" on Hollywood's Revenge Records ("When all else fails, try Revenge") creeps in somewhere between the moody goth-with-a-wink of the



Le Tigre's JD Samson looks to address "issues of lesbian labor, visibility, and objectification in the deceptively familiar format of the 12-month photo calendar." Calendars are available from Spring Street Gallery 186 1/2 Spring Street, New York or from www.mrlady.com.

Damned and the stripped-down swagger of the Cramps. They're the kind of band you've got to see in a bar—a dark one if possible, a smoky one if you can swing it, and one where slipping into at least a cheap buzz by the time Lube waltzes onstage ("To a strange musical kind of music," Simon says. "There was an old British TV series called *Tales of the Unexpected*—that sort of pastiche") is quick and easy.

"We have a real problem finding bands to play with that are in any way close to what we do," Simon says. "Music in the UK isn't great now—if you're a huge band, fine, but people aren't going out to gigs. There's not a lot of scene for the kind of stuff we do, so we get put on

with a lot of heavy guitar bands who have the whole sort of generic MTV thing down pat."

That's what dragged them across the Atlantic for a handful of California shows this summer—they were hoping to find some people who'd get it. They play such an off-kilter mix of American and British styles—the Gun Club and the Smiths, John Spencer and T Rex—that they wanted to see how actual Americans would react to it. But transcontinental touring on a 7" and some self-released cassette tapes?

"Yeah, it takes a little belief," Simon says. "I think we're really interested in seeing how potentially easy or not it can be—we're at the practical stage of taking our guitars over and seeing whether we get has-

sled at customs!"

And it's a welcome reversal from the usual way things flow, with American bands stomping across the continent like they own it. So Lube is set to sleep on the label guy's floor, play a few shows with non-nu-metal bands, and

sample the best the country can throw at them.

"Taco Bell?" Simon says. "We're willing to delve."

—Chris Žiegler

Contact Lube at lubelube1@active-mail.com. Contact Revenge Records at 5835 Harold Way #203, Hollywood, CA 90028 scarecrowhart@hotmail.com.

The War Comes Home

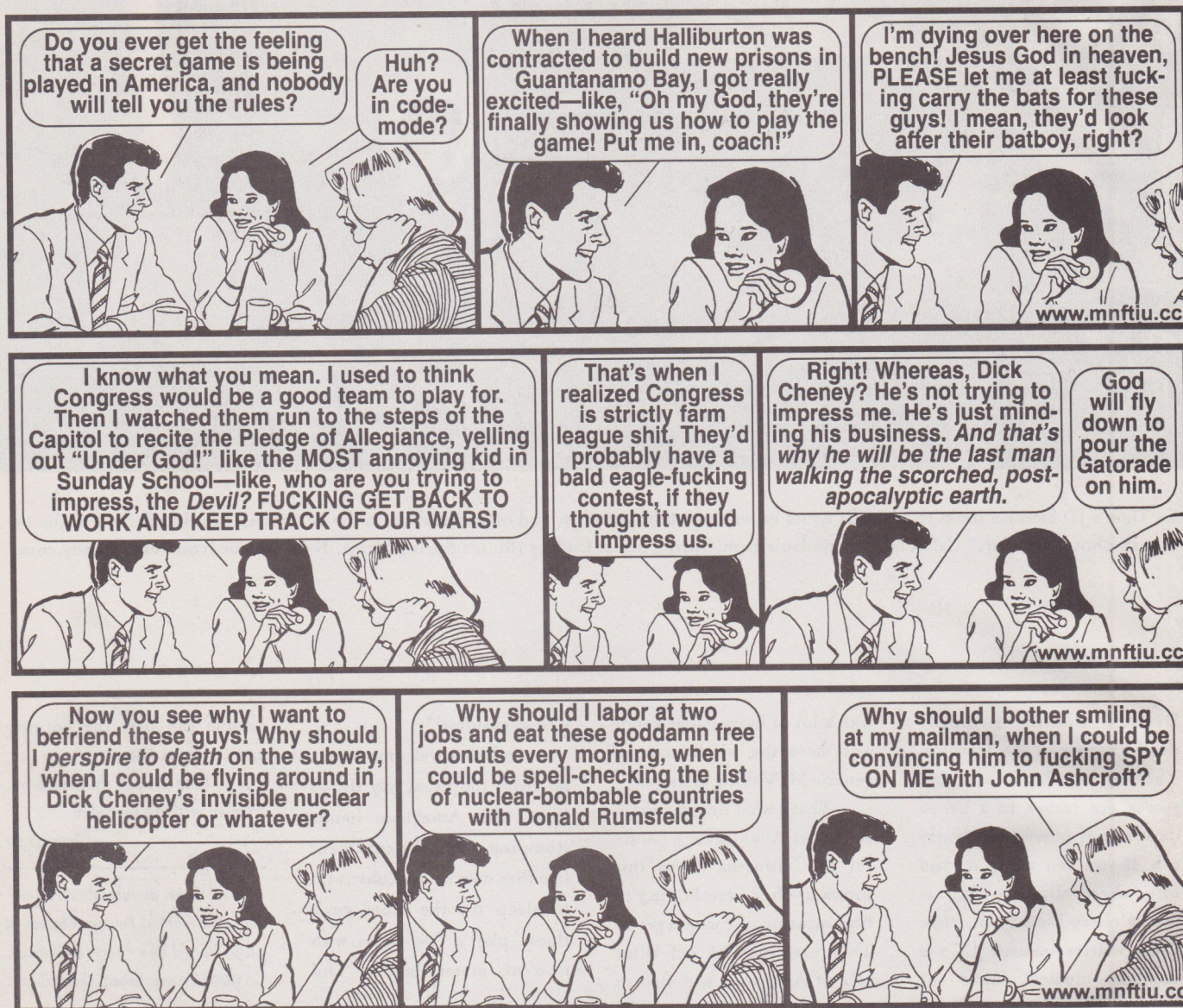
DID A CONTROVERSIAL MALARIA DRUG PLAY A PART IN THE MURDERS OF FOUR SOLDIER'S WIVES?

The war is already coming home, the way wars always do, in the form of drugs and psychosis. Witness the murders of four Fort Bragg soldiers' wives in the space of six weeks. Fort Bragg is the home of the Special Forces Command. Three of the four

soldiers had recently returned from Afghanistan, where they served with Special Forces units.

"He was like my own child," said Wilma Watson, describing her son-in-law, Master Sergeant Wright. "Until he came back from

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES



Afghanistan, I didn’t worry about violence.” Wright killed her daughter. “He was getting these attacks of rage.”

One line of defense, discussed in an interesting piece published in *Newsday* by UPI reporters, Mark Benjamin and Dan Olmsted, is that at least two of the soldiers had been taking

Lariam (aka mefloquine). As the reporters wrote: “Lariam has been blamed for psychotic episodes and suicidal behavior for more than a decade. The official product information sheet, written by manufacturer Hoffman-La Roche and approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, states

Lariam has been associated with aggression, paranoia and suicidal thoughts.”

It is also the Army’s drug of choice to prevent malaria.

There’s nothing to equal the military as the incubator of violence. The four murdered women in Fort Bragg have paid an installment, and the payments in terms of rage, drunkenness,

drug addiction and antisocial behavior will be exacted month after month for years to come, amid the resolute determination of the press not to connect the dots. —Counterpunch. ©

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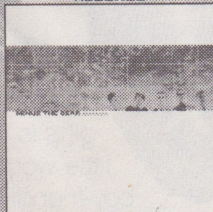


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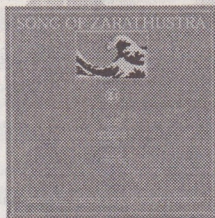
MINUS THE BEAR

"Highly Refined Pirates"

MINUS THE BEAR has followed up last year's debut EP with a gem of a full-length album.

"Highly Refined Pirates" delivers 14 new and fully realized songs, polished properly, skillfully arranged, and with enough hooks to keep everyone singing along.

SUICIDE SQUEEZE RECORDS



SONG OF ZARATHUSTRA

"A View from High Tides"

SONG OF ZARATHUSTRA return with their long-awaited sophomore release, A View From High Tides, clearly their strongest to date.

TROUBLEMAN UNLIMITED



THE DISCONTENT

"The Discontent"

THE DISCONTENT have been described as a combination of "street punk and smash rock...think SHAM 69 meets the HELLACOPTERS in the 21st century."

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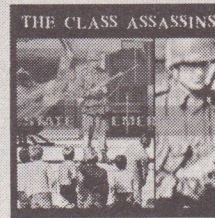


CHANNEL THREE

"Channel Three"

The Legendary CHANNEL THREE return with an all new 14 song studio release! This record brings back the sound that made them one of the most respected and admired punk rock bands to have ever emerged from southern California.

DR. STRANGE RECORDS



CLASS ASSASSINS

"State of Emergency"

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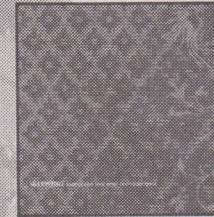


SMALL BROWN BIKE/THE CASKET LOTTERY

"Riding With Death"

The SMALL BROWN BIKE/THE CASKET LOTTERY Riding With Death EP isn't another split release of throwaway songs, but a six-song collaborative effort in the truest sense.

SECOND NATURE RECORDINGS



WAXWING

"Nobody Can Take What Everybody Owns"

Musically, WAXWING has never been as complex, rocking, varied or dynamic, while ROCKY VOTOLATO's brooding, passionate voice has never been so forceful or compelling.

SECOND NATURE RECORDINGS



THE KRAYS

"A Time for Action"

Since their formation in 1994, THE KRAYS have been a force to be reckoned with in the New York punk scene. Their many releases and constant touring have earned them the status as underground heroes around the globe.

TKO RECORDS



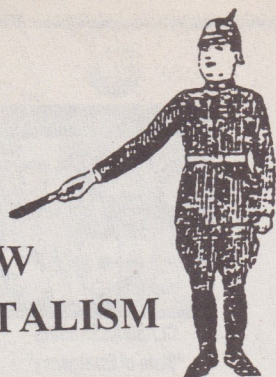
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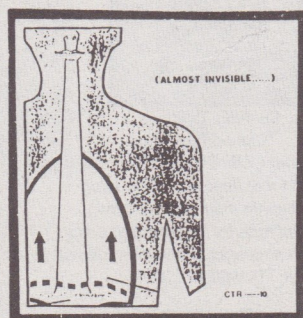
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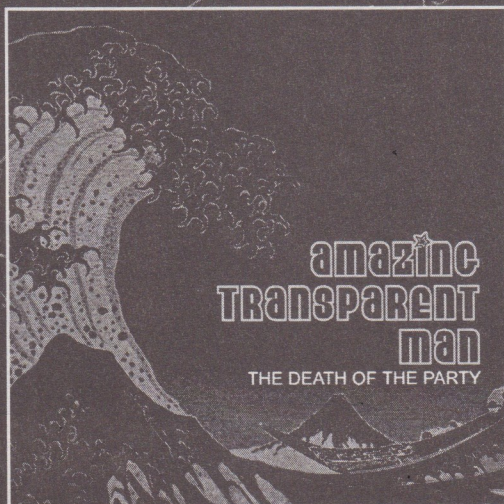
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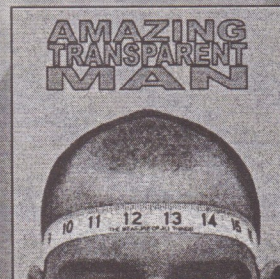
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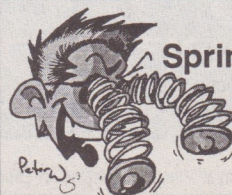
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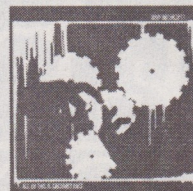
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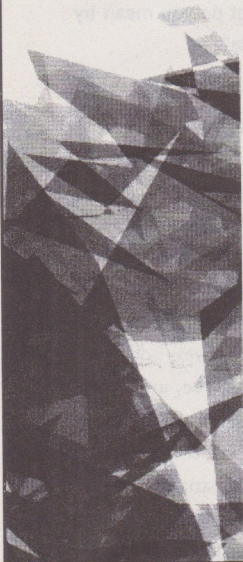


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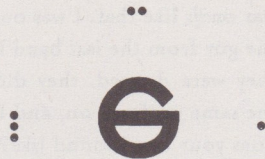
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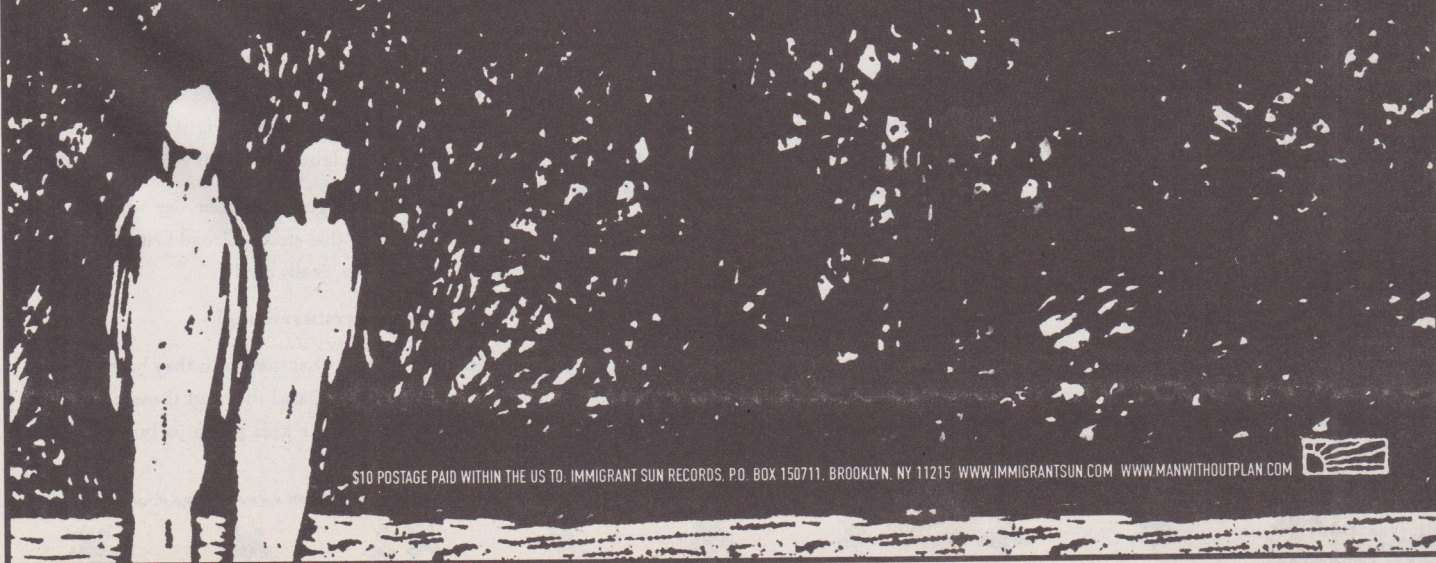
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You're going to want to let your guard down around the Kills. They're worth it. It took VV and Hotel years to get a band like this—a band where they can just completely unravel themselves into the songs—and it works better if you're ready to forget everything you heard about them and just let them go.

Yes, guitarist/singer VV used to be named Alison and used to be in the legendary Discount, who broke up after a heartfelt last show in their hometown of Gainesville, Florida; the applause after their last song thundered through the better part of 20 minutes. And guitarist/singer Hotel used to be named Jamie and used to be in a band called Scarfo; if you lived in England when he did, maybe you would

So what happened at your show tonight? I find you sitting here in your rental car in the parking lot, and it looks like you've been in there for a while.

VV: We stayed outside mostly the whole time.

Hotel: I went in for a bit. It was the kind of band where you get guys screaming and shouting—sort of a homoerotic guy-core—and the first band was like that, and the second band was like that, and the third band was *exactly* like that. I was outside talking to the guy from the last band because the way they were dressed, they didn't have quite the same uniform on, and I said, "So what does your band sound like?" And he said,

just a service to people, but we kind of play some stuff that they maybe hadn't really thought of listening to before. It's strange to get kids with those sort of long-shorts things they wear, or with backwards baseball hats, and they're going, "That was amazing!" It seems this is the moment we're at, where the outsiders have become the norm—they're the insiders now.

Last night, you said something about wanting to "turn it on its head." What do you mean by that? What do we need to do?

Hotel: During the last decade or so, with the 'net and everything just dirt cheap, suddenly everybody's a filmmaker, everybody's got a website, every band's got a CD out. It's just cheap and accessible and with a click of a mouse you can get your face around the whole world. But it seems like it's been a creeping thing where people can get everywhere basically for free, and everybody can hype themselves basically for free, and I just think people are *sick* of it. It doesn't mean anything anymore. There was a time when someone could put an advertising board up, and you'd go, "Wow, what's that?" And now it doesn't do *anything*. You see that stuff more than you see clear skies. It's the same thing when you see bands everywhere. There's no bands you kind of discover yourself, or if there are bands that people discover themselves, they're basically kind of tricked into it. So now you get record companies going, "Do a little tour. Play for the kids, make the kids feel like they kind of 'found you.' And then we'll do this."

Did someone actually say that to you?

VV: Absolutely. Their advice to us is to put out singles and things on our own and let everyone feel they discovered us. Meanwhile, they are putting the singles all over the world, but you're still on your little label. And then at the right time, you sign to a major label and it all works out.

Hotel: There's a guy the other day who was like, "You know that chain, Urban Outfitters? And they're, like, really cool? . . ."

VV: This is *so* embarrassing!

Hotel: ". . . And what they do is they have like a compilation CD, and they put these bands on it, and when the kids go in to buy their

KILLS

ARE THEY GONNA LIKE US BECAUSE WE'RE DIFFERENT? OR HATE US BECAUSE WE'RE NOT THE SAME?

have been at their last show, too. Understandably, the Kills don't want to play out as—or be played out as—only the sum of two parts. This time around is an X crossing out the old things, VV says. Maybe that's the reason for the new names, the new sound, the new identities, and the obvious new inspiration.

Add up their old bands and you wouldn't get anything close to their *Black Rooster* EP on Dim Mak, which simmers with a (probably deliberately) uneven lo-fi guitar-and-drums-and-whatever-we-had-around-the-house four-track aesthetic. It's a proudly unrehearsed and stubbornly honest portrait of VV and Hotel as artists, of VV and Hotel as musicians, of VV and Hotel as slightly worn-down but still cheerful iconoclasts, and of VV and Hotel as two of the most affably modest but resolutely determined personalities you'll ever meet.

We met at midnight at a strip-mall Denny's to talk music like burnt-around-the-edges veterans; they'd been up for three days straight and still couldn't sit still.

Interview by **Chris Ziegler**

Artwork by **The Kills**

Portrait photo by **James Bunoan**

"Oh, pretty much like that!" He saw all our gear and was like, "Do you not have drums? Because we recently toured with a band that had a drum machine. And some kids really liked it because it was different, and other times, kids hated it because it wasn't the same." That's where we're at: are they gonna like us because we're different? Or hate us because we're not the same? Tonight, I think it was kind of split. The kids in the back were throwing stuff.

Like what?

VV: Pringles cans!

Hotel: They were throwing snacks at us!

Do people frequently pelt you with snacks? What kind of reaction do you get for being sometimes different and sometimes *not* the same?

Hotel: We played a show in Chicago, with a lot of hardcore-ish bands—and that was pretty amazing. There was a line 'round and 'round the merchandise table. They were like, "Wow, we've never heard anything like that!" Not that I want to be in a band that's

stylish clothes, they slip the CD in their bag! So when they go home, they feel like they discovered the band! That's a really cool thing to do!"

VV: And he was *serious*!

Hotel: That's what I mean about tricking people—how about *not* tricking them, just letting them fucking discover something?

It's creepy that some company would know about you before *anyone*, like they already have this leash on you. And they already have plans for you.

VV: "Have your fun now!" Like there'll be point where we're *not* gonna have fun.

There used to be a demarcation between the little people and the big companies and now it's blurred so much. Where do you go to get away?

Hotel: It's really complex. There was a time when the perception of major labels was that they wore suits, they were old guys, and then they sent young "street" looking people out to go to shows. Now, it's not really like that. They laid off a lot of people in the '90s because they made mistakes. They saw a scene happening with independent music and they thought, "We need to get some of these bands." They gave them huge advances and then they didn't do anything. They lost *loads* of money, which culminated in laying lots of people off. But now they're employing *genuinely* kind of cool people that are into music. And that's even *more* scary because they aren't fakes. They are people that are really into music. And it's like, "What's the enemy now?" I don't even know what it is.

Does there even need to be an enemy? Why should people care



EVERYTHING WE'RE DOING



to do. People totally stopped thinking for themselves quite a while ago.

Are you trying to make people realize that?

VV: We're not trying to make anyone do anything, but there is a message of just doing what you want to do. And everything we're doing is just what we want to do.

about this, when a lot of them just want to listen to a band?

VV: It's not an enemy, but there's a trickery element in it. We've already gotten ourselves into total confused trouble. Things get blown out of proportion. There are people that seem really really nice, and all of a sudden, they make some decision for you that you didn't decide. You're always watching your own back. And that's not a very positive thing.

I always liked bands that get their personality across, whatever it is—you can do it with one chord, just like you can paint with only one color. But as long as it's honest, it works. And that seems so diluted now. It's rare to find a band with a voice of their own.

VV: Standards have gone down so much. Kids are brought up on so much TV, so many glossy mags, so much *everything* to tell them what

Hotel: But in a sense—if you take it from a point of view that doing your own art, writing your own songs, having complete control over your creativity, having your own club or whatever—if you take that and presume that it is good, which personally I do, then you've got to presume other things are bad. And it would follow that a record label or something to come on board and give you a bunch of money in exchange for control is bad. But if that's the case, because boundaries are so blurred and there is no obvious bad guy and no obvious good guy anymore—independent labels aren't independent anymore, and even more so-called "artist-friendly" labels operate in very corporate kind of ways—it's easier for bands to lose track of what they're doing.

So is there anything left that's untouched?

Hotel: Maybe not.

VV: I can't really think of anything.

I used to order records from people and really got the sense they were a kid in their bedroom—someone like me.

VV: We've really lost that.

It's like people want to camouflage it—like it's fun to play the game and see how "professional" you can be, to compete against whatever it is you're looking up to. But then it seems like it all just turns into differently-scaled versions of the same established thing. It's like going to a show at the mall.

VV: That's exactly what Hotel said: "This is like playing a show in a shopping mall."

And people don't care..

VV: They don't even notice! It's not like an issue! And that's the scary thing—there's nothing scarier than the fact that everyone's oblivious.

You said we're losing something . . . what are we losing?

VV: It's so extreme, it's gonna get to the point—like everything else does when it's so extreme—that something really big will happen. Something's gotta change. It's just gonna eat itself in the end.

Hotel: I'm not even sure how relevant that whole bedroom-DIY thing is anymore. As much as I love it, you can't help but think it's not really a viable opposition to the huge machine on the other side of it. It's almost admitting defeat, admitting you're happy playing to 50 people and selling a couple hundred records. As admirable as that is, it's not gonna turn anything on its head.

So is that the challenge? To take the ideas you had when you played for 50 people and make them apply to 500 people—or 5,000? Who's done that?

Hotel: Fugazi.

VV: And the thing is, they're a really good band. They definitely didn't back down for any reason.

But I can't think of anyone else. It's like everyone looks inward because it's safer. They just play for each other, and nobody tries to get out there.

Hotel: It's so easy for that attitude to get eroded. I have friends that are really staunch and adamant about DIY music, but it doesn't extend to any other areas of their life. But it's hard! What do we want to be? Do we want to boycott everything? I can understand the attitude, the politics of boycott. But maybe it's a bit outdated—we've got to think of something else. It's not doing it.

So do you want to make a manifesto? We could write it on these Denny's napkins.

VV: It's impossible to write—it's a really individual thing. If people are honest with themselves and really know what they love—which most people don't—it sort of works

IS JUST WHAT WE WANT TO DO.

itself out. But there is no sort of "way" to do that. You just gotta really work at finding that. But then you're not going to let anything touch it, or going to let anyone have it or mess it up or anything. That's the kind of confidence people need to get. And a lot of people give up, or it doesn't occur to people, so they never have the opportunity to figure it out.

Hotel: That's kind of what we *can* do. You can have a manifesto of what you will and won't do, but look how much things have changed in the last couple of years. And they're not gonna slow down—you have to be able to adapt.

Have you figured out what you love? And stuck to it?

VV: I've always known exactly what I want to do and have always just done it, and I never had much of a problem with it. I think that's why we got along. It's pretty easy to understand where each other are coming from. Basically, we're not going to do bad things to each other. People who don't know what they love are really vulnerable about working on things—it's such a headache.

Hotel: Those are the people who need manifestoes—the ones who aren't really sure.

So you think it's inborn?

VV: I do. I've always known what I want to do.

Hotel: I think it's foolish to say, "We know what to do, we have a manifesto of what we *will* and *won't* do, and this is what it takes to turn the music business on its head" or whatever. I've seen plenty of instances of people who said that kind of thing and it makes for good reading, but it's not action. As boring as it sounds, I think if you're just aware that you need to adapt, the main thing is not to let too much go.

What about the stories I hear about you guys living on bread and water out in London? I mean, it's romantic to stick to your ideals and all, but that really can't be all that pleasant.

VV: It is OK, though. It's what we're used to. Neither of us have any money, neither of us are working. We just play

music all the time. It's almost funny. It totally keeps you going.

How did you get used to that?

VV: I don't know. I've always played music to support myself and I really wanted to do this thing with him, and you don't have very much money, so you just make it work. You just make it work to do what you want to do. It's not terrible by any means. When you see yourself actually doing it, it fills in all the holes. But I think of all the houses and weird things I was living in . . . they were nightmares.

Like what?

VV: Well, the first three months, I stayed at Hotel's house, which was OK, except I think he wanted to kill me.

Hotel: I didn't want to kill you, I just wanted to hurt you! Injure you!

VV: Then I moved into a really really cheap place with this woman who had a lot of mental problems—she smashed all the windows in the apartment and was always going crazy, and it was really hard. And I lived there with her for six months. It was very stressful. It was a bad time.

How did you two find each other?

Hotel: Well, her old band stayed at my house—which was kind of a hotel for bands—a couple times and we just got on. I kind of think we both felt we were in a scene of music, a different scene, and we didn't really fit.

What's the connection between you? What's the spark?

Hotel: "The spark?"

Not to sound too interviewer-y.

Hotel: I'm not sure I've thought about it.

I know people who won't drive a half-hour to practice, and you moved across the Atlantic.

Hotel: We're both pretty obsessive. I don't know, I never considered doing anything else other than playing. I never considered using my degree to get anything.

What's your degree in?

Hotel: [sheepishly]

Drama! I did a sort of one-man performance thing, a little playwriting, but I never considered doing anything else than music. I'll do music 'til I've actually got bailiffs at my door, and then I'll go out and work in the studio for a week or something so I can buy some more secondhand equipment, and then do some more.

You have a menagerie of old equipment, then?

Hotel: We've got an old Moog and it's really sick—only a few keys work. But the ones that work have got this glorious sound! And we made all these microphones out of telephone receivers—we went through a whole month of making microphones, like getting little speakers out of headphones and putting them in baking soda tins to see how they sound.

How'd they sound?

Hotel: Pretty bad—but we used it!

I was curious about the sound of your record—have you heard the *American Anthology of Folk Music*?

Hotel: Yeah!

VV: We've been listening to it in the car!

Hotel: That's the biggest compliment!

You know that sensation you get when you listen to it—is that what you were going for on your record?

Hotel: We just want it to sound really organic. So do you know Dock Boggs? Unbelievable!

Yeah, Dock Boggs is probably spinning in his grave because we're talking about him in *Punk Planet*.

Hotel: And Blind Willie Johnson, Charlie Patton . . . they were recording on wax cylinders, and it sounds like it's coming from the grave! If there is such a thing as soul, they've got it! We talk about that a lot, we listen to loads of that stuff, and we're like, "Wouldn't it be cool to record on a wax cylinder, to get that kind of sound?" The studio we picked had a completely vin-



fucked, nerv
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tage sound—like a deck from the late '50s, with nothing in it after 1968.

VV: It was unbelievable.

Hotel: It was a museum. I heard the guy got some of the stuff out of Abbey Road in the '60s, so we went to see it, and we're like, "Let's do it!" You know when you hear old '50s rockabilly records, and there's a little bit of distortion on the mic when they scream?

VV: It's *obviously* not an effect.

Hotel: It's just such a beautiful sound, so we figured we'd try and find mics like that. Not to try and be retro about it, but everyone got rid of their studios and got computers and ProTools and everything. And whether it's subconscious or not, it's affected the way music sounds.

It's a lost art. If you wanted to go back and make a record like that, you couldn't. It's weird—I wonder if in 50 years there will be an "American Anthology of Punk Music," with songs recorded on four tracks in hotel rooms. You wonder if it's going to stay relevant.

Hotel: Well, it's nearly 80 years later, and we're still talking about Dock Boggs.

Yeah, but you wonder if all these ideas we always talk about are just going to be fossils or museum pieces.

Hotel: Everything is so disposable now anyway. Nothing is built to last, not even music. So it's like, "Where do we go?" It's got something to do with turning it on its head—but we're not claiming to know. We're pledging to have the attitude, but whether we know the answer? We don't know.

Do people ever talk to you about stuff like this? Because it's not like a conversation that you'd just start up after a bar show or something.

VV: We talk about this stuff.

Hotel: Which maybe . . . if there's a spark, that's definitely helping. You just get involved in circles of people, and get so used to living day in and day out. People think it's weird if you start a conversation like that. Where I come from, they don't want to talk about that. They want to talk about the latest really funny TV show or something.

Well, it's easy to write some song about going out and living your life and whatever, but to actually say, "Fuck it, I'm doing it."

Hotel: Honestly, it's never crossed my mind. It's never been an issue, other than every now and then someone will let me know I'm not doing too well for myself and that, you know, I could go out and get a job. But it honestly never bothers me.

Do you think it's important that there are bands people can actually believe in? Like the Minutemen, maybe—a band that feels like they really *meant* it, that wasn't saying things just to say them?

Hotel: Absolutely. I think about the sort of legacy we're inheriting. You used to get beaten up for listening to jazz, you know? You could go as far to say that a youth culture based on music stopped the Vietnam war. It's been *incredibly* important. And it would be horrible to feel that while we were alive, that what we left was something that just "fit in", that was *disposable*. That we didn't have a band that you'd take one in the eye for.

You have so much energy—where do you get it from?

VV: We just decided at the beginning that we wanted ground zero. No past or nothing. And then we would document everything from day one, and we've been keeping everything since. Absolutely *everything*. It's just become habit.

Hotel: We haven't changed anything by doing the Kills. This is what we've always done: write stuff constantly, do art, and play music constantly.

VV: I feel like that.

Hotel: It's just *carte blanche* to do whatever you like, and the only thing you're going to get from it is respect from the other person, because that is what we both want to do. There have been weeks where we maybe spent two hours *not* doing this, apart from sleep. But it's just been from the minute we got up, just constant work.

So how much do you sleep?

Hotel: So far, we're on three hours a night, if that.

VV: It depends how many days straight and how much stuff we've been through. We haven't slept for three days, but we'll sleep after this. We still don't sleep that long. We'll stay up 'til fucking seven in the morning again, always.

Sounds incredibly intense.

VV: It's incredibly fun.

Hotel: I don't know whether we're on a roll or this is just the way it is.

How long have you two been at this?

Hotel: When did we first start playing together? A year ago?

VV: Just before I went home for a time in Florida. It was that trip back from the air-

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port where we really started to talk about everything that was really important.

Hotel: Yeah, that felt like a revelation! I picked her up from the airport when she flew in and it just felt like, "Yeah! Yeah!" It started off, "Wouldn't it be great if we had this?" and, "It'd be really good to do this!" And by the end of it, we were like, "Then we're gonna do this! And get this!" And before we knew it, it was, "We're doing this!"

VV: It was really good. We wrote a list where it was what we wanted to accomplish in a certain amount of time. It was a really unfathomable amount of things, and we did it *all*. It was really incredible, just feeling it all get crossed off—and we just keep fucking writing it.

You're such a one in a million combination.

Hotel: Aw!

Yeah, I know. But you're like these two really focused, really solitary, really creative people . . .

Hotel: No, I feel like that.

VV: Yeah.

. . . and then you somehow put it all together . . .

VV: And it's like a fucking monster!

Hotel: I don't know. To be specific, in terms of songwriting, it just works really well. [To VV] I fill in the gaps you don't do and you fill in the gaps I don't do. It's definitely the best kind of combination I've ever come across in my life, whether it's work or art or whatever. There's nothing I wouldn't . . . there's nothing I wouldn't trust you with, artwise.

[VV hugs him]

Hotel: [sheepish again] This is getting really gay now! I'm gonna cry! [long pause] But the

Kills have only been together for four months. Come back in a year!

This is going to be the most sappy interview I ever did!

Hotel: No!

OK, let's move in a different direction: Why did you rewrite your history?

VV: I just wanted to start over with everything. I'd had it with doing what I had been doing. I *absolutely* didn't want it in my head. I wanted to be really naive and like a little child again and just start my work. That's my feeling about it, and a really important part of it to me.

Hotel: I was kind of getting strangled by a lot of baggage that probably wasn't even there anymore, but it was in my head—history and bad experiences. I tried to do a side project thing and had a lot of really bad experiences with that, and it got me really depressed. I just didn't want to be thinking about that. I don't know really . . . there's not a clever answer for it. It was really just saying, "If we really feel like this is the beginning of something, let's *completely* make it the beginning."

Is it weird when people bring up your old bands?

VV: It's not weird—people do it all the time. I'm not the kind of person who brings it up, and when I did this tour, I didn't want to mention it.

Hotel: In a way, that's just a practical thing. It would be dumb to bill shows as "Ex-Discount" on it because it's not, really. There's someone in the Kills that sang for Discount, but it would be trickery to try and get people to come on that kind of signpost. It's sending them the wrong way.

It would also be easy and convenient.

VV: But it's also good, though. We talked about that: "This whole thing could be a complete disaster." But we're just gonna hang in there and do it. We really wanted to leave England right now and really wanted to go to America. We just wanted to escape and do whatever we wanted. So it didn't really matter if it worked out. I had *no idea* how it would go. I had never booked a tour in my life. I never knew what was involved.

Hotel: And never will again!

VV: It just took too long, and I spent way too much time on the computer which I really, really hate. It got me quite bitchy at points just because I got so sick of doing it and I couldn't handle it. But booking a two month out of nowhere for a band no one has ever heard of and trying not to mention the bands you did before is not so easy.

Hotel: We didn't even have a name then!

VV: But we were booking shows and getting them with no name. I do want to say it's possible to book your own tour, even now, for free over e-mail—but it's *fucking* irritating!

Hotel: It's really humbling. People go out of their way to help us, just on the strength of what they heard. We've made lifelong friends from that. And that's really encouraging—that opened our minds up. Maybe things *can* be turned on their heads, maybe you *don't* have to get your press release right and make sure you got the right sort of reference points and whatnot. Maybe there is a world out there that *will* just listen to something and love it. It's been quite encouraging. ☺

DENALI

JUST MAKE GOOD MUSIC WITH WHAT YOU KNOW, AND IF IT'S TRUE TO THAT, THEN IT WILL BE NOTICED

“We’re not pissed.” That’s from the last e-mail I get from Denali, a band that, as of late, has officially been proclaimed *the shit* by indie enthusiasts, slick mainstream music magazines and, in all likelihood, the snobby clerks at your local record store.

Not that this should surprise you: Denali’s self-titled debut album is a sophisticated piece of art-punk splendor trapped somewhere between its momentous rhythms and vocalist Maura Davis’ golden-voiced howls. Rounded out by bassist/brother Keeley Davis, guitarist Cam DiNunzio and drummer Jonathan Fuller, Denali started out two years ago when Maura grew tired of watching from the sidelines as Keeley plugged along the Richmond, VA punk circuit with Engine Down.

Since then, Denali has signed on with Jade Tree and recorded their first album. They’ve also become bona fide underground darlings—finding themselves spoken about in

the same breath as some of the most innovative and interesting bands in the scene.

Hopefully, the most obvious reason for this is the music: a divine blend of post-punk energy and Bjork-like theatrics that makes their self-titled album worth every bit of hype that trails it. And, once again, one hopes that’s why the members of Denali have been thrust into indie rock’s bright spotlight—even though they’re pissed off about it. Or not pissed. Sometimes I just can’t tell.

“I think [your] honest inquiries struck a nerve,” DiNunzio writes. “We have been fielding a lot of comments lately from people who assume that we were given this free ride because we’ve started out in high-gear . . . but I’ve been playing in bands for over 14 years now in almost total obscurity. Isn’t that long enough?”

To find out about the hype and the damage done, I contacted all four members of Denali in the middle of their first US tour.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

A lot of people have decided to shout your praises really quickly—I think the paper in Richmond went as far as calling you “the greatest band in the world” before you had even done this first tour. How do you react to stuff like that?

Jonathan: Wow, did they? I should show that to my mom. It’s totally flattering, but I take it with a grain of salt. As you said, it was in the Richmond paper—which is not necessarily at the forefront of musical culture.

Cam: Make that one *huge* grain of salt. I remember the sound guy in Baltimore saying the exact same thing after our very first show two years ago, and I just kind of shrugged and thought, “Well, I guess he means we have something kind of cool going on here.”

Can you understand why people feel this way? Is that something, as a musician, you can ever see—or are you too far removed?

Jonathan: I don’t spend too much time



thinking about it. I'm just keeping my fingers crossed that people continue to share my excitement about the music we're making.

Keeley: I don't think I am too far removed. I put so much work into this band because it produces sounds that I would listen to even if I wasn't a part of it.

Signing with Jade Tree, recording with Mark Linkous—you've certainly fallen in with a pretty respectable crowd, rather quickly. Do you ever wish you struggled more?

Jonathan: I feel like we've all—with the exception of Maura—done our fair share of struggling with our previous bands over the last ten years. So, yes, I wish that she struggled. Just kidding.

Maura: I struggled doing recitals and musicals! Who really likes to struggle anyway?

Keeley: I am 26 and don't need to if I don't have to. Yes, this band has been easier than any other band I have ever been in, but that is mainly due to experience.

Do you think that sort of struggle is becoming less important to bands? Obviously you guys had one of the biggest indie labels in the country talking to you after only being a band for a few months. Not to be too critical, but, you know, couldn't that actually be a bad thing?

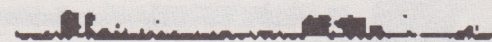
Jonathan: Let's not romanticize struggling too much here. If struggling is what it will take to share our music with people, then struggling is what we will continue to do. But it's definitely not something that any of us would *choose* to do, given the choice.

Cam: For bands like ours, whose members have already done it over and over again, there's no need to go back to a cargo van with no windows or AC or some kid's bedroom record label when we can do something a little more organized. Perhaps "struggling" would be more of an issue if we were all 18 years old, in the same situation, and had never seen the inside of a squat or a Sioux Falls basement—but it isn't.

Keeley: I think experience can go a long way.

A band can be on the hype-machine and not "struggle" because they are the hot thing at the moment, but that usually means a similar fall will happen just as fast. Without experience and knowledge you have a greater chance of making the one mistake that will send you falling from the fast and fragile hype-coaster. I like to think that we haven't struggled because we have already made those mistakes in other bands and have learned that things don't have to be so complicated. Just make good music with what you know, and if it's true to that, then it will be noticed. Word count: "struggle" was used 15 times in those last two questions.

I don't mean to use "struggle" as some braver-than-thou term—and I certainly don't consider it the big, pissy word you make it out to be. I just believe that, with the recognition you've received, a lot of people assume that doors are just flying open for you. That may be partially true, but it's also true that you're still out there earning devotion one fan at a time. Which is the best part . . . right?



THE FUNNY THING ABOUT PUNK: IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE AGAINST RULES, BUT WHEN YOU GET COINED AS A "PUNK" BAND, THE RULES CAN BE RATHER STRICT.

Jonathan: Definitely. You were there at our show in LA, where we were *literally* earning devotion *one* fan at a time.

Cam: Totally. The best thing is having someone come up to you after a show, saying, "My friend dragged me here because she thought that I would like you guys and I'm so glad I came." You're also correct about the misconception that people are just falling over each other to help us out. There are so many things that we would love to do, but just can't yet for the simple fact that we're still a baby band. There are bands that we'd love to tour with, people that we'd love to work with, places we'd like to play, toys we'd love to have, vans that we'd love to own. But for the small amount of people who have heard of us, so many have no idea that we exist, or just dislike us because they think that we haven't "paid our dues."

But let's face it: not everyone can know that you "paid your dues." Jonathan was in Bats & Mice and Engine Down with Keeley, Cam spent time in both Lazycain and River City High . . . I know that. I'm just playing the devil's advocate. But you can't really *expect* people to know that.

Jonathan: I don't expect any preferential treatment. I just wish that people would give us a little credit and not immediately assume that we *just* learned to play our instruments and got into a van for the first time.

Keeley: I actually enjoy it when people see our show and think that we are newcomers. If they really think we have obtained this knowledge of performance, touring,

recording, writing, social atmospheres, and straight-up music business from just watching others do it, then it just makes us look more with-it. I don't feel it is important to inform music listeners about our past experiences, because it does nothing to improve how you listen to our music.

With all of this happening so soon, does it feel like you've been awarded an opportunity?

Keeley: Sometimes it does feel like a window has opened and if I don't jump through soon, it will close. But at the same time, I am not in this band to come and go. I want us to go through all that we can for as long as we can.

What do you think you'll do with that opportunity?

Jonathan: Everything we can.

Maura: Whatever we feel should come next.

Obviously there seems to be a lot of bands as of late putting out more challenging musical statements—bands like the Gloria Record or Kid 606 or Bright Eyes or even you guys—where things are less punk in *sound*, but certainly punk in *presentation*. Would you hope to include yourself in that crowd? Does something like this excite you?

Cam: I think it's totally exciting, though I've never considered punk to have a specific "sound." It's a personal thing, you know? If other people look at us that way, that's fine. I've always been open to anything that bends the rules or just ignores them all together.

Keeley: I don't like the idea of being classified into any presentation. I want to create music without boundaries, but surely my background and personal use of music may create a "punk" presentation, and that is fine. It doesn't excite me though, because my goal in Denali is not to "stay punk."

Do you take offense to being called a punk band?

Cam: I personally don't take offense, though, like Keeley, my phobia for labeling of any kind will always prevail. I think that in the basic sense of the word, we do things our way and on our own terms. But then again who doesn't? Fortunately for us, a lot of different kinds of people identify with our art, so there are no rules or scene politics for us to worry about.

Keeley: That's the funny thing about punk: It is supposed to be against rules, but when you get coined as a "punk" band, the rules can be rather strict. If someone thinks of Denali as punk in some way then I would love to see how that is. I don't take offense to being called a punk band. I just don't understand why that would be.

This is the last question, I guess: Where are you at the moment?

Keeley: In the van, with seven hours to go, on our way to Chicago to play two shows in one day. What was your definition of *struggling* again? ©

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SEPTEMBER 11, 2002—In a media environment only slightly more critical of US policies than it was one year ago, finding opinions as fierce and outspoken as Michael Parenti's is still something of a shock. The concepts Parenti outlines in the interview below (and expands on further in his book *The Terrorism Trap: September 11 and Beyond*) are still often taboo in mainstream society, where flag lapel pins are *de rigueur*. As Parenti points out below, under the USA Patriot Act—which rushed through Congress in the flag-waving fervor following the September 11th tragedy—simply discussing the weaknesses in US foreign and domestic policy could be construed as aiding and abetting terrorism. In this uncertain time, it's refreshing to come across someone as unapologetically critical and outspoken as Michael Parenti.

Parenti received a PhD in Political Science at Yale University. He is one of the nation's leading progressive thinkers, an uncompromising advocate for political and social justice. He has written 16 books, including *Democracy for the Few*, *Dirty Truths*, and *The Sword and the Dollar*. His latest book, *The Terrorism Trap* was published by City Lights Books.

Introduction by **Daniel Sinker** and **David Ross**
Interview by **David Ross**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

I'd like to start out with the title of your new book. What do you mean by a terrorism "trap"?

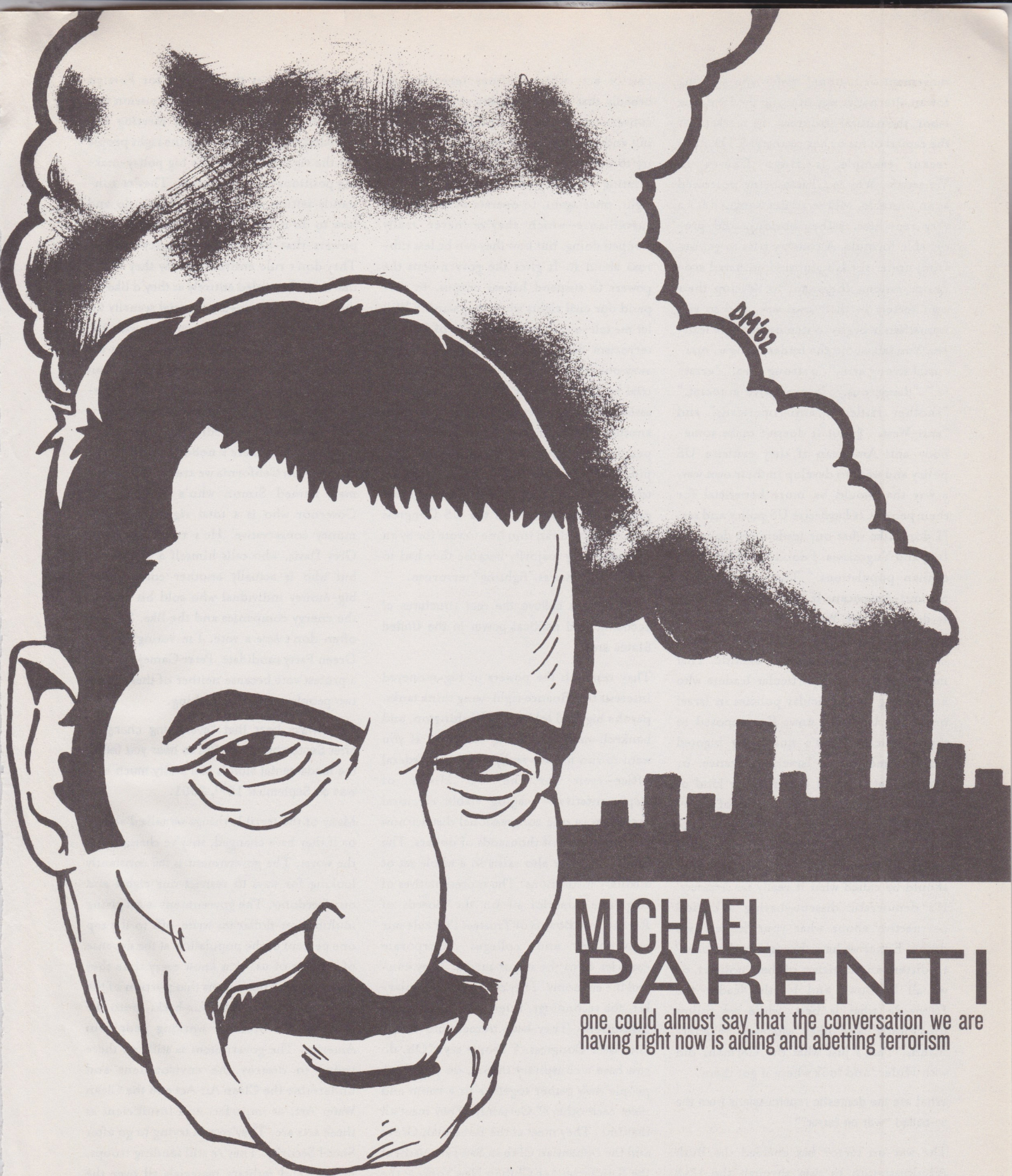
The acts of terrorism that took place on September 11 must be seen in a wider context. The reason these people attacked us are two-fold. First there is the immediate reason—they're driven by an apocalyptic religious ideology. But at the same time the question comes up, "Why did they attack the United States?" ¶ Bush says the answer is because we're so free and prosperous. Well, Denmark is a lot freer and a lot more prosperous than we are. So is Sweden, and a number of other Western European countries, but they are not being attacked in this same way. So we must try to look at the larger conditional causes of terrorism. The terrorist groups that have arisen in the Middle East and Central Asia have emerged from societies in which all popular coalitions and democratic movements have been destroyed by US interventionism: Turkey, Yemen,

Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and others. In country after country where democratic forces have tried to mobilize for political and economic democracy, where student leaders, labor union leaders, farm and peasant communal collective leaders, independent journalists, liberal clergy, women's rights advocates, and various other groups of people, have fought for social change in a democratic direction, these reformist democratic forces have been the object of the worst sort of oppression over the last half century. Democratic interests have been destroyed or left with nothing to hold on to. Finding their economies, their cultures, and their societies spinning or sinking beyond their grasp—finding themselves with no control over their lives—many of these people, in a mixture of hope and desperation, turn to a kind of totalizing religious solution. One that actually preaches direct action and revenge against the evil empire, in this case, as they see it, America. ¶ But it's really not *America* that's doing this to them, it's the US ruling class. America itself is a entity of 260 million people, that make up many diverse groups—most of whom do not want to see their tax dollars expended and the blood of their sons and daughters spilt in far off places, the names of which they don't even know, and usually cannot even find on the map. They wonder why so much is spent on war and so little on things like local education. Their schools are falling apart. The roof on the school is leaking and the kids don't have sufficient textbooks and school materials. And that's not just in inner cities. I know schools in California, in certain suburban areas, where the art teachers go out with their own money and buy art supplies for the students because the budgets have been cut back so much. ¶ US leaders have built military bases all over the world. It seems US forces have got to be *everywhere*, all over the world, occupying countries from Bosnia to Macedonia, to Kosovo, to Afghanistan, to Tashkent, more and more places at the taxpayer's expense. Meanwhile the quality of life in the US is being neglected and deteriorating. And they're wondering why we have so much public poverty and so much private wealth, so much civilian poverty and so much military glut and military wealth. ¶ So it's not really true that

Americans are clamoring for empire. Despite the monopoly propaganda of the corporate media and national security state, Americans do at times question the terrible costs and burdens of empire. But during times of crises, real or fabricated, our leaders manage to convince people to rally mindlessly around the flag, telling them, "this is for democracy," "this is for our national security," "we've got to do this to fight terrorism." ¶ Well, what's happened? US forces went into Afghanistan, destroying much of that already battered country—all supposedly to catch Osama Bin Laden. But they never caught him, and now they say, "Oh that's not very important anyway, we don't really have to catch him." The White House is now predicting that al-Qaeda is planning some other terrorist strikes of major magnitude, coming soon. So what exactly was accomplished by waging war upon a weak, impoverished, and battered country? ¶ People say, "Well what would you do?" I would go out and hunt the terrorist cells, *specifically*. I wouldn't go out and bomb whole cities and villages. That's like trying to catch a flea with a giant sledgehammer. But that policy has served George Bush and his reactionaries in Washington quite well under the guise of this terrorism battle. While the rest of us—you and I—saw September 11 as a horrible, horrible tragedy, they saw it as a golden opportunity and they've been pushing their reactionary agenda ever since. The first thing George II did to fight terrorism after September 11, was to call for an additional tax cut for the very rich. And the next thing he did was to jack up the military budget even more—another 50 billion—until now it's close to 400 billion dollars. None of this enhances our security against terrorism.

So what do you think the real motives behind US foreign policy are?

I believe the real motives behind most of US foreign policy—these may not be the only concerns or the only interests, but the major basic motives as measured by the kinds of countries US leaders support and the kinds of countries or political movements they try to destroy—is to keep the world safe for the Fortune 500. To make sure that the transnational corporations and international global finance capital continues to control the land, labor, resources, and markets of most of the world, and ultimately, all of the world on terms that are extremely favorable to them. The goal is to destroy, to obliterate, to thwart any social



MICHAEL PARENTI

one could almost say that the conversation we are
having right now is aiding and abetting terrorism

movement or national leader who is trying for an alternative way of using the land, the labor, the natural resources, the markets, or the capital of his or her country. ¶ The most recent example is Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Why is Chavez being portrayed as an unstable, wild-eyed demagogue? It's a very repetitive, rather obvious, and predictable formula. A country tries to get out from under the US global-dominated economic system, they want to develop their own society in their own way, and so you immediately begin to demonize their leaders. You talk about the leader being a "mercurial strong arm," "a strong man," "erratic," "dangerous," "a repressive autocrat," "another Hitler," "anti-American," and "anti-West." ¶ But it doesn't make somebody anti-American if they criticize US policy and want to develop in their own way, a way that would be more beneficial for their people. If I criticize US policy and say, "I don't like what our leaders are doing in Iraq and Yugoslavia. I don't like it bombing civilian populations." That doesn't make me anti-American. If I criticize what Israel is doing in the West Bank, in Jenin, in Hebron, and other places, that doesn't make me anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. That makes me anti- the particular leaders who are making the particular policies in Israel or in the US right now. I'm opposed to those policies. That's not being bigoted against America, or Israel, or France, or China, that is just a manipulative kind of labeling. ¶ To oppose the policies of a government does not mean you are against the country or the people that the government supposedly represents. Such opposition should be called what it really is: *democracy*. It's democratic dissent—having a critical perspective about what your leaders are doing. Either we have the right to democratic dissent and criticism of these policies, or we all lie down and let the leader—the *Führer*—do what is best, while we follow uncritically, and obey whatever he commands. That's just what the Germans did with Hitler, and look where it got them.

What are the domestic repercussions from the so-called "war on terror?"

The war on terror has enabled the Bush Administration to ram through the USA

Patriot act, which defines terrorism so broadly that one could almost say that the conversation we are having right now is aiding and abetting terrorism, and they could try to make a case against us. I'm not exaggerating. ¶ This "law" gives the CIA the right, once again, to operate with domestic surveillance—which they've never really stopped doing, but now they can be less subtle about it. It gives the government the powers to suspend habeas corpus, to suspend our civil rights when they want. ¶ Well let me tell you, if under the guise of fighting terrorism they think they're going to take away our right to dissent, and our right to a trial by jury, and our right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, they've got another think coming because millions of people *do not* agree with that hysterical, stupid, USA so-called-Patriot act. It has *nothing* to do with patriotism. It is an act which that gaggle of wimps they call the US Congress stampeded and ran into line to vote for by an overwhelming majority because they had to show themselves as "fighting" terrorism.

What do you believe the real structures of economic and political power in the United States are?

They rest with the powers of big-moneyed interests that finance right-wing think tanks, pay the big paid lobbyist in Washington, and bankroll most of the big elections. If you want to run for any really important federal office—even for the US House of Representatives—waging viable electoral campaign in one congressional district now costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. The moneyed power also exists in a whole set of auxiliary institutions. The representatives of corporate America sit on the Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees that rule our universities and colleges. Corporate America owns the major media. They control the economy. They control the job market, the technology, interest rates, financial institutions. They have tremendous influence over Congress. ¶ People say, "Oh, do you have a conspiracy theory, do you think people *really* gather together in a room and meet each other?" Certainly. They meet all the time. They meet at the Bohemian Grove and the Bohemian Club in San Francisco; at the Knickerbocker Club in New York; at the

White House; at the Council for Foreign Relations; at the Trilateral Commission and elsewhere. They're constantly meeting and confabulating, and selecting the right people for the right positions—the big policy-making positions—in government. They're constantly setting up policies, what to do and how to do it and how this best protects the powers-that-be and the money-that-is. They don't rule entirely the way they would like to. If they ruled entirely as they'd like to, they would have wiped out social security 20 years ago. They still have to deal with the popular vote to some degree and these are precious democratic rights. ¶ That's about all we've got left—*these few rights*—and sometimes not even that, as dissent is repressed or blocked out of the media. And the vote is devalued when there's nobody worth voting for. Here in California we are faced with one man named Simon who's running for Governor who is a total right-wing, big-money conservative. He's running against Grey Davis, who calls himself a Democrat, but who is actually another conservative, big-money individual who sold his soul to the energy companies and the like. So, you often don't *have* a vote. I'm voting for the Green Party candidate, Peter Camejo, just as a protest vote because neither of these other two people are worth anything.

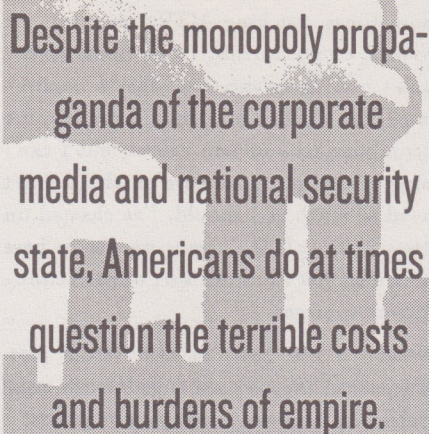
You always hear that "everything changed" after September 11th. But to hear you tell it, the fundamental stuff is still pretty much as it was on September 10th, 2001.

Many of the terrible things we talked about, or if they have changed, they've changed for the worst. The government is *still* constantly looking for ways to restrict our rights and our freedoms. The government is *still* giving multibillion-dollar tax write-offs to the top one percent of the population at the expense of the rest of us. You know every time they get a tax break that means that portion of the tax burden shifts onto our backs, onto the backs of the ordinary working people in America. The government is still out there trying to destroy the environment and undermine the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, as imperfect and insufficient as those acts are. They're still trying to go after Social Security. They're still sending troops, money, and military materials all over the

world to suppress other people who are trying to build better lives for their own countries, trying to get some land reform, trying to get a new kind of government that would give education to the common people, that refuses to sell all the public resources off to big corporations for a song. US leaders, in the service of the big corporations, continue to undermine movements and governments that are trying to develop in more democratic ways, responsive to the needs of their people. ¶ So I haven't seen all that much *really* changing since September 11. Now, of course, for the people who are directly impacted by the tragedy, who have lost loved ones and such, their lives have changed forever and this is something they'll live with for the rest of their lives.

Do you believe our system is reformable? And if not, what is your vision of an alternative political/economic system that would be more just?

I see a system in which the people who do the labor, who work and create the value in society, should be the ones who have the say as to how it will be used. That means you've got to have elections that are not money-driven but are really based on issues with clear alternative perspectives. You've got to have voting systems that are not restrictive, not an obstacle course designed to disfranchise the poor and the dissident. You've got to have free open ballot access to a variety of parties. You should have proportional representation, which means that if a political party gets 15% of the vote, they will get roughly 15% of the representation in the State Assembly or the Congress, or wherever it may be. You should get rid of the Electoral College, which elects the president with 550 votes or so. You should have a *direct* election of the president by popular vote, so that every vote counts equally regardless of its location. ¶ You should also have a whole change in our priorities. The corporations should be heavily taxed. They used to provide about 20-30 percent of the national revenue, and today they provide more like 6-7 percent, if that. Many of the biggest corporations don't even pay taxes. They have so many tax write offs, they actually get refunded for taxes they never even paid! What a system. ¶ I would also put under public ownership some of the basic industries in our society: the utilities,



Despite the monopoly propaganda of the corporate media and national security state, Americans do at times question the terrible costs and burdens of empire.

the energy companies, and that sort of thing. I would develop alternative, renewable, sustainable, energy systems: tidal energy, thermal energy, wind energy, solar power energy. These things are not pie-in-the-sky things. I hear that by 2030 Germany is going to be moving toward a point where 1/3 or 1/2 of their national energy sources are going to come from wind. Denmark is doing the same thing. There are countries all over the world doing the same thing. There are houses in the United States—literally thousands of them—that are heated either partially or totally by solar power. One could go on. There's no mystery as to what could be done. The alternatives are there. And they're not just in blueprints, they're actually being put into operation in communities. ¶ I would support family farming and communal farming which is often the safest farming. It's the best, and is often very efficient. It may not have that immediate, high-powered, mass productivity that the big agribusiness farms have, but the commodities that come out are usually safer and cleaner. They're not ridden with genetically engineered foods or pesticides, or at least not as much. The family farm and the communal farm uses the water on its own land, so they don't poison it and spray it to the same degree as big agribusiness. They care for the land. In the long run, they're more efficient. They don't just do cosmetic farming. They don't just discard 1/3 of the crop because it might have some scratches on the

skin of the potato or it looks irregular in shape. ¶ I would democratize our universities so that they're not run by a small group of rich businessmen who stand with ideological control over much of the faculty and administration. I would have the universities run by committees of faculty and administrators and students and staff, all of them having a say in things. It might be a little more difficult, sometimes a little messier, sometimes very wonderful and very rewarding, but it would at least be more democratic, more creative and more equitable so the universities wouldn't serve as instruments of the big corporations as they increasingly are. ¶ That's just scratching the surface. But they're going in the other direction. They want to privatize our water systems, so we have to pay exorbitant prices for our water. There are now communities in India where these poor struggling families are paying 30-40 percent of their income just for water. The globalizing corporate goal is to do the same here. They're looking for commodities that people can't do without that they can grab hold of. Anything in the public sector that is being produced by the state, by the government, for the people, creating jobs and spending power, creating a tax base, fulfilling human needs—but without making a profit for the moneyed class—is hated by that class. They want to move in and grab hold of everything, be it education, health, medical care, water supplies, electrical utilities, or whatever else. Privatize, deregulate, and hand it over to the moneybags. They will charge whatever the market will bear. They will do these sorts of things and the rest of us will be their economic slaves, working just to buy the basic necessities of life. That's their goal, the third worldization of America and everywhere else. They just want to get richer and richer and make us work harder and harder for less and less. ©

*First published in the July/August issue of International Socialist Review. David Ross is a grass-roots activist who has worked on the Nader campaign, corporate accountability, U.S. imperialism, and environmental issues. He can be reached at dav-
eross27@hotmail.com.*

Unlike the futures as displayed in the vision of some Hollywood director's major motion picture, author Zoe Trope's writing makes you realize that the future isn't some far off place we'll all get to, if only we work hard enough. Oh no. That's not it at all. Trope's debut book *Please Don't Kill the Freshman*, hollers an entirely different idea altogether: The future is here. It's happening right now, and the stories we tell about these moments—stories like Trope's—are the only things that can save us.

Zoe Trope's an insider, writing from behind enemy lines with the wit and strength of a mind that defies her age (just—get this—*fifteen*) and denies her status as “just another kid.” She's working hard, to help inspire a better, brighter future than any bigwig media-mogul with a bazillion dollar budget could ever conceive of.

This is her future and present. Her words are the here and now. They're honest words—so honest that she can't write under her real name. She was forced to take “Zoe Trope” on as a pseudonym to protect herself from discrimination and potential lawsuits from the various members of her high school. But all the rest is real.

Reading *Please Don't Kill the Freshman*, you realize that the future is getting a chance to speak out. Trope's only 15 and yet ready for anything. The rest of the world ought to be listening.

Interview by Will Tupper

How did writing your book come about? What was the genesis of it?

Jeez, “the genesis”—you make it sound so Biblical. Who knows, maybe it is. Anyway, I'm 15 now, but I started writing the book a year ago. I started writing these little journal entries when I was bored in class. The first one is just a rant I wrote during my civics class. I sent these pieces to Kevin Sampsell, a small press author and publisher. I knew him because I was part of an 8th grade writing class he taught and we kept in touch through e-mail after the class was over. He was really impressed with the entries and suggested we make them into a book. It seemed totally unreal to me. I'd kind of hoped Kevin would be interested in my writing—that's why I sent it to him—and hoped he could give me some feedback or something, but of course my true secret desire was that he would want to publish it.

And then he *did* want to publish it. It still seems like a total dream to me. ¶ I don't consider myself to be a prodigy. I'll admit to occasionally drinking Coca-Cola or sometimes watching MTV2 just for the videos, or not turning in my homework. I can't play the piano—isn't that a requirement for all child prodigies? I can play the trombone to a certain extent, but I can't sing or play piano or solve puzzles. I don't read as much as I should. I've cheated on tests before. I don't want people to have this idea that I'm some sort of perfection-driven teenager.

What's it like being in high school post-Columbine? Do you have to go through metal detectors? Are there armed security guards?

You're not the first person who's asked me this and I don't know how to answer you. I don't know what you want hear. Do you want me to tell you how awful it is? How *oppressed* I am? How all the popular people hate everyone else? I guess I try to ignore all of that. Yes, my school has security guards, but the only thing they're armed with is a walkie-talkie which apparently makes them feel like God. Their occupation seems to consist of busting kids that skip class, asking for hall passes, and pulling you out of class to tell you that the vice principal needs to see you because your best-selling small press book could get you sued for libel. But that's just my life. I haven't had great experiences with security guards in the past. They've pulled me out of class to take inappropriate signs off my locker (“Piss Off a Politician—Vote” or “I hate the rich”) on more than one occasion. I guess, like most high schoolers, I don't believe anything bad is gonna happen at my school. ¶ What's high school like? It's just a place that I go for six hours a day, five days a week. There are people there who are older than me and supposedly more educated, but I wonder how much they really teach me. I wonder how much they let me teach them. High school isn't who I am or what I am. It's just, at the moment, *where* I am.

At the beginning of the book you write, “This is not an education. I am in day care.” What would you do to make school better?

You know, it's so much easier to complain

than actually offer a solution. That's why so many problems in this world haven't been solved yet. I think high school needs to be smaller. I think kids need more attention. I think adults need to care more. I think we all need to care about each other *a lot* more. High school makes some people so cold and so hard. Not just the kids, but the adults too. People get so wrapped up in this tiny little microcosm of skirts and baggy jeans and bad grades and school plays and dances and assemblies that maybe we lose track of what it all really means. I wish it challenged kids more. Less worksheets and more discussions. But who has the time to really educate anyone in high school? It's just an assembly line sometimes, one grade to the next until you're gone. You're done. And you choose where to go from there.

What would you tell people who harbor misconceptions about how high school is now?

I think the misconception is that we're the kids you see on TV. I think teenagers have a lot more individuality than people realize. If you ever sat down and talked with some of us, you'd know. Someone asked me once what I hoped would happen because of my book. Part of what I want to happen is youth liberation. I want to assure people that not all teenagers are dumbasses. Talk to us. We're just like you, only we haven't been here as long—so teach us, tell us. ¶ I see a lot of people trying to convince teenagers that life is a certain way: You have to buy the minivan and pop out the babies and go through the McDonald's drive-thru window. But that isn't *life*; that isn't *living*. Kids don't realize there are other options out there because people don't tell them. The majority of kids lean towards the mainstream. That's what *makes* it the mainstream. But given the choices and the correct information, I think most teens would choose otherwise.

One of the things that floored me about *Please Don't Kill the Freshman* was how forward everybody seemed about sex and sexuality. All your characters, who are based on people you really know, struck me as just being so blunt about sex. I was stunned.

I don't know about *all* high schoolers, but my friends and I are just horny liberal kids.

At parties, we usually end up sitting around talking about masturbation, sex, how far we've gone with people, and then we break out the sex dice—it's the spin-the-bottle for the new generation. All of my friends have really inclusive ideas about love and sexuality. I think we're all a little queer, even if some of my friends are straight. Love is love, and none of us question that. We do make a hell of a lot of jokes about dicks and sex, though—open-minded we may be, mature, we're not.

How did your parents react to the book? Did it come as a big shock to them? You really put yourself out there in parts.

I think my mother has this idea that parts of the book are "fictionalized." Either that or she just doesn't mind what I wrote about. My father hasn't read all of it, but some of my relatives have. My grandmother said something to the effect of, "Zoe is such a bright girl, why does she use the f-word so much?" I am who I am. Writing *Please Don't Kill the Freshman* is definitely one of the most revealing things I've done, but I'm not afraid of who I am or what I've done or how I've thought in the past. The book is part of me. Everyone knows that.

Compared to your folks, how did your friends feel? Was anyone angry at how they were portrayed?

My friends loved reading the book and trying to pick out who they were. It's kind of like solving a puzzle to them. Most of my friends agree that I wrote what I felt at the time, and while not everything I wrote was really nice, it was honest. And they know I love them, so no one really got their feelings hurt. ¶ The administration at my school didn't appreciate the honesty in my book. My vice principal called me into her office a month or so after it had been published to warn me that I could possibly be sued for libel because of the things I had written about a certain teacher. She also warned me that I should be more careful when writing in the future. Bottom line? I can't advertise my book at school or use the school to sell my book. The school wants nothing to do with it. The teacher who could possibly sue me if they wanted to hasn't said a word to me all year. They

haven't taken any legal action, and from what I've heard, they don't plan on taking any legal action any time in the near future. I think the vice-principal just called me into her office to scare me. She didn't call my parents or tell my counselor or anyone else about it.

You've written an underground literary best-seller. You just got back from a short book tour with several other authors, through California. Your publisher confided in me that he's betting you have a major book contract before you graduate high school. So I've just got to ask: What else do you want to do?

Swedish porn star, official sock-rocker, Top Ramen fan, and freckle donator. But seriously, some days, it's all too much to think about. My book has already given me

some great opportunities, which I am very thankful for, and I can only imagine what's going to happen in the future. I want to do a million and one things. I want to write. I want to make people feel things. I want to fall in love a lot, with everything and everyone that's beautiful. I want to be young for a long time so I can do stupid shit and get away with it. I want to go to college. I want to make people feel better about themselves. I want to wear corduroy patchwork pants and grow my hair out to my waist. I'm youthful and idealistic and aren't you jealous 'cause you can't be this way without feeling foolish? You can't say these things without someone bursting out laughing? At least when I say them, people have the decency to shut their mouths and allow me to experience disappointment. ☺



Please Don't Kill the Freshman



WITH ZOE TROPE

Nonchalance is the name of an irregular army of guerilla artists who have blanketed the streets of Oakland, California, in defense of "original Oakland charm," and Jeff Hull is the person around whom this loose collective coalesced. Hull first expressed his interest in preserving the cultural legacy of his hometown with a sticker design that took the city's official oak tree logo and extended its roots, in much the same way that Oakland—one of the country's most ethnically diverse cities, as well as hosting one of the highest concentrations of artists—has historically extended its arms to migrants who can't settle anywhere else in the Bay Area.

As his "Oaklandish" sticker became ubiquitous (and regularly bitten by other crews), Hull's projects grew in size and concept, from the Oaklandish Poster Campaign to the Oakland Love Retrospective slideshow, projecting icons from Oakland's celebrated and criminal pasts on the sides of landmark buildings. By doing art in the streets, Hull met like-minded individuals to roll with, such as Kemrexx and Refa One of the Bay Area Aerosol Heritage Society, whose slideshow documentary of Bay Area graffiti, called "The Legendary Eighties," is a hit at Nonchalance's regular Liberation Drive-In screenings.

The range of projects emerging under the Nonchalance umbrella defeats any simplistic effort to define what Nonchalance is, but all its work—from the zines of Sean and Katie Aaberg, through the pirate radio, metallurgy, and photo-fuckery of Geoff St. John and the Vulcan Studios posse, to the underground arts calendar assembled by Leah Roderman—shares the dirt hustle and street moxie that define Oakland and its underground scenes.

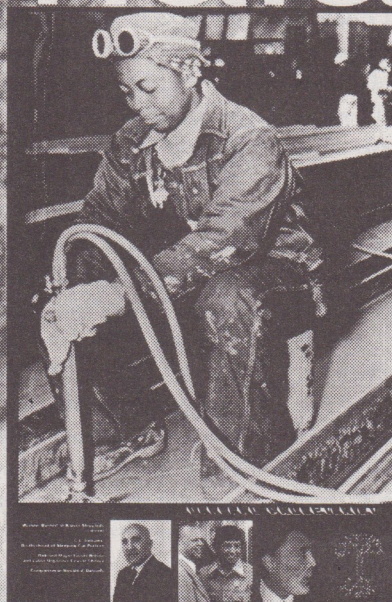
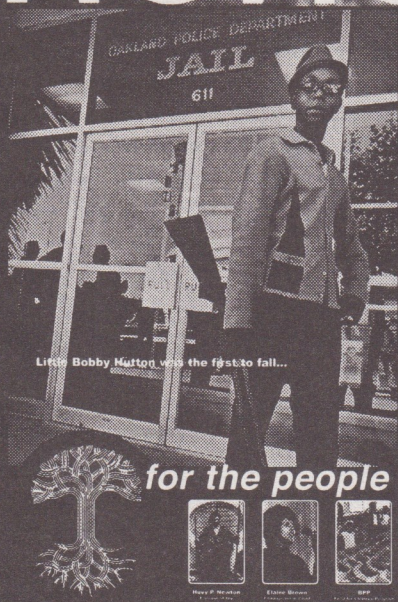
Nonchalance events are for people who don't like their art or their history simple, or sold to them in slick marketing campaigns, and the growth of Nonchalance—in the shadow of the city's official 150th anniversary celebrations—suggests a dissatisfaction with the booster culture of civic uplift that prevailed during the dot.com years, and a sense of the possibilities when people connect their virtual worlds with their civic ones

Interview by **Aaron Shuman**

Where does your interest in public space come from?

I've been made aware through doing this work exactly how interested in public space I am, and how far back that goes. At first I wasn't really thinking about the social controls over public space—I wasn't even aware of it until I tried to do art in public space. I was more commenting on commercialism in culture and in our space, like the fact that the only messaging that exists in public space seems to be *commercial* messaging. I was trying to cover that up with *cultural* messaging: the Oaklandish Poster Campaign. It was also commenting on how rapidly the Bay Area was changing, and how if you're gonna move to Oakland, or if you're gonna develop in Oakland, just please have some respect or knowledge of the legacy that exists here. But when I started getting out there and trying to put the posters up, they would just be removed the very next day or painted over with gray paint. I had been very conscious of where I was putting them. I wasn't gonna do them in any residential areas; I would only do it in what I called "negative urban space"—unused or underutilized space. If a store has a "For Lease" sign in its window for over a year, that's negative urban space to me and I'm gonna put a poster up there. If it's an underpass of a freeway with no residents or businesses there, that's negative urban space to me, and I'm gonna use it. But even in those spaces, it would get painted over the very next day. It must be the most effective department in City Hall because they're on it! [snaps fingers] ¶ I realized that it's not that there's no art around in public because people aren't interested in doing it, there's no spontaneous artwork in public because it's *not allowed*. It's covered up. Realizing that compelled me to do something where people could actually get together and see something besides a billboard in public space, which led to the Oakland History slideshows and the Liberation Drive-In. ¶ It was only through my involvement in artwork that I even became aware that public space was so controlled, and it became somewhat political at that point. Before it wasn't totally politically motivated. In fact, I wasn't even very politically aware at that time.

nonchalance





How did Nonchalance get started?

Nonchalance was a domain name that I owned which I had totally other plans for. The term "divine nonchalance" or a "non-chalant" were words I came up with in the early '90s. The people we were hanging out with were immensely talented but absolutely hapless, like they had no management or control of their own day-to-day lives, because of just how off-the-hook they were, spontaneous or loaded or whatever. We'd say, "they're a nonchalant." Like they'd just step forward into this space and the scaffolding comes right into place under their feet. That's nonchalance: you're just stumbling through life! ¶ That's where we started using the word, and then I had the domain name. During the dot.com thing, I was gonna do this sexy little website, but I ended up quitting doing any web stuff, and went to art school. I ended up dropping out after one semester. I quit! That's really when Nonchalance was born. I was like, "I'm gonna buy a projector; I'm gonna do this myself instead of doing it within a program." That was the birth of Nonchalance as an art project or a collective.

How does Nonchalance operate exactly? Is it a collective, or is it a project you're the director of?

It's changing. Before, it was just kinda whimsical me with the support of a lot of friends. Now we all got together and we're like, "let's do this collectively. Let's take things to the next level, whatever that level is." And so all these people are representing Nonchalance, and Nonchalance is representing them. Before, it was just a spirit; we were all doing stuff in the same spirit. And now everybody can do whatever it is they want to do, but there's an effort to do more collaborative works and to consolidate our web identities under the umbrella of the Nonchalance project. It's not like we have any official or unofficial members. It's still a loose affiliation of artists who have been somewhat anonymous up to this point. If it became too official, it wouldn't be Nonchalant. But in the future, we're gonna investigate getting non-profit status and grants and try to get rewarded for the work we're doing. It's not about being underground or being legit, it's just about how can we make this self-propelling? How can we keep doing it?

The website says Nonchalance is dedicated to "original Oakland charm." How do you define "original Oakland charm"?

I realized that nostalgia was the biggest thing when I came here to the Mosswood playground: I could smell it. I was one of these little kids out here; I have a scar on the back of my head from trying to do a cherry drop on the monkey bars that are no longer over there. Oakland will *never* be the same, and I will never be the same person I was back then. Oakland's changed, I've changed, and I'm motivated by this great sense of the past—about my own childhood, about an Oakland that once was. ¶ Although we're kind of critical of the Jerry Brown years or the dot.com influence and all those things, it's also with a sense of irony; we know that the city is changing and it has to change, we know that we're changing and we have to change, and that I can't go back to the Berkeley Square and listen to the Freaky Executives anymore. But we can still *celebrate* the things that affected our identity. It was through living in other places that I realized how much Oakland had created my identity. ¶ And that's where



I REALIZED THAT IT'S NOT THAT THERE'S NO ART AROUND IN PUBLIC BECAUSE PEOPLE AREN'T INTERESTED IN DOING IT, THERE'S NO SPONTANEOUS ARTWORK IN PUBLIC BECAUSE IT'S *NOT ALLOWED*.

the word "Oaklandish" comes from. It asks what are these things that are very specific to this area and this climate and this population? There are very specific things that I can go back and say, that's why I'm this way! That's why I smoke weed, or that's why I give my male friends hugs, or that's why I nod to people in the street. I went to LA, and I went to Chicago, and nobody wanted to give me a hug! Or in those places, I couldn't take for granted that somebody was gonna be slightly radical. And I realized that stuff was the Oakland in me—that was *Oaklandish*. These oak trees; the climate; this Mediterranean city; the mellow vibe. This is original Oakland charm. ¶ When I moved back to Oakland, it was changing really fast. I was like, "Oh my god, my hometown!" I wanted to protect it. So part

of the motivation was to remind people that Oakland sucked for a long time. In 2000, people in San Francisco just started going, "Oh, we love Oakland! Oakland's really pretty, and what great property values!" And it's like, oh now you like Oakland! It's been the armpit of the Bay Area for the last 50 years, and then suddenly, everybody wants to move here. So that's why the images of the things that scared people away from Oakland—things like the Hell's Angels and the foot that was found in Lake Merritt—show up in the Oakland slide show and the poster campaign. It's like: hey, remember when Oakland sucked? Remember when it had this huge stigma? Remember when you were scared to come here? ¶ I chose eleven figures for the posters that represented dif-

ferent aspects of Oakland's history—people that have helped not only shape the identity of the city but have a broader influence that helped mold either American or global popular culture in a certain way. Whether it's Julia Morgan the architect, Isadora Duncan the dancer, Larry Graham the bassist, Bruce Lee, or Dream the graffiti artist, each of these people has an influence on the identity of Oakland but also on culture outside of Oakland. And that's definitely true for the Black Panthers and the Hell's Angels too. ¶ But when you see them out of context—when you see them as posters on the street—it's like unanswered questions. I've watched people looking at the posters, going "Who is that? What is that?" And then somebody else will start to tell a story and an actual dialogue begins. ©

What if every kid penning tunes in the bedroom, head-banging in the basement or smashing guitars at keg parties took it one step further? What if every young aspiring rocker shut his or her eyes, inhaled a single massive breath and went for it—brought their music out of the basement and took every necessary step to get it heard?

Would we have some sort of unheard of rock 'n' roll explosion on our hands—a mind-blowing flood of undying determination and impassioned angst? Would the infamous rock critic Greil Marcus write up rave reviews on each of them, just like he did on New York City-based punk-rockers The Hissyyfits?

Now, I'm not saying every single garage act is talented enough to blow our minds and be praised by Marcus. But, more often than not, the ones that have the balls to take the plunge also have the unbreakable heart and soul to back it up.

"I got this urge and inspiration to do it myself and picked up a guitar and moved to New York with basically no knowledge of anything," explains The Hissyyfits frontwoman Holly Jacobs (a.k.a. Princess). "I put an ad in the *Village Voice* looking for people to do it with for fun. I had no idea it would take off and become what it's become. I have to pinch myself every day and be like, 'Am I really doing this?'"

It only takes one step to set off an avalanche of change. Fear and rationale stand in the way for a lot of us, keeping us pacing comfortably in circles, denying dreams and clinging to stagnancy. What we don't realize is it just takes one step. You don't think about it and—at the risk of sounding like a commercial—you just do it; you just *do*. I interviewed John Doe of X recently and one statement he made will forever stand out in my mind: "If you're *thinking*, you're probably blowing it. If you're *being*, you're on track."

Princess must've been doing a whole lotta being when she crafted The Hissyyfits' unmistakably honest, heart-on-the-sleeve debut album *Letters From Frank*, which was released to critical acclaim (Marcus called it "perfect pop") last summer. Strung by tales of heart-break ("That's my muse," Princess concedes), the album is led by Princess's powerfully sexy singing atop tell-it-like-it-is subjects and in-charge, fierce sounds. Vocals harmonize beautifully like a pattern of flying birds. Dark guitars

crunch, grind, thrash and seep like poison into the smart, bittersweet pop melodies. The Hissyyfits (Princess, bassist Hallie Bullitt, drummer Sivan Harlap and, the band's latest addition, viola player Karen Correa (a.k.a. Ren)) meld a dark and gritty side with pop's sugary infection and '60s girl group croons—a contrast as plain as night and day and as powerful as sparks and gasoline.

As frank and open as the tunes she composes, Princess holds nothing back nor dresses anything up. Sometimes giggling at her own realities or admitting to feelings with—what felt like over the phone, rolled eyes or shrugged shoulders—her honesty and sincerity were plain. Without it, she may have never taken the plunge headfirst.

Interview by Jenny Tatone

You've been in the band and been a musician for a long time. Has it been something that you've always known you wanted to do?

No. I wasn't musical at all growing up. I tried to take a piano lesson here and there and tried to take choir in elementary school on occasion but I never felt I had much talent for any of it, although I've always loved music. But I never really thought I had a *talent* for it—or even the courage to do it myself. ¶ I was actually already out of college and in a corporate job when I realized that it wasn't for me. I wasn't satisfied or fulfilled and I realized just how much I love music. I got this urge and inspiration to do it myself and picked up a guitar and moved to New York with basically no knowledge of anything. I put an ad in the *Village Voice* looking for people to do it with for fun. I had no idea it would take off and become what it's become. I have to pinch myself every day and be like, "Am I really doing this? Wow, I'm *good* at writing songs." We have a cool thing going on and I'm grateful for it and thrilled that I took the plunge and just did it. I never would have known.

I wanted to talk about your overall sound. The album is a really nice mixture of the darker side but also has catchy pop parts too. What brought you to that mix?

I don't think it's anything conscious that I know of necessarily 'cause I was exposed to so many different types of music growing

up. But I've always had an affinity for melodies and harmonies. Growing up, I would be into the Beach Boys or old '60s girl group harmonies. But I also really liked Kiss, The Who, and things that really rocked. All that stuff just kind of seeps in unconsciously and it's been reflected back out with the music.

Do you write all the music as well?

I've written the majority of the music since the band has been around, but everyone who's been in the band has been really musical and writes and contributes a lot. It's a situation where everyone is encouraged to contribute, but it just happens to be that I'm the most prolific. I guess I'm kind of the voice of the band in a sense—the steady foundation. But there's been contributions along the way here and there and there will be on the new album as well from other people in the band, which I really like.

Do other people in the band bring different influences that are distinct from yours, or are you all pretty similar?

I think each person brings their own thing but we always seem to be able to incorporate it into our sound, make it cohesive and make it a Hissyyfits song even if it's coming from a different place. For instance, my new viola player, Karen, obviously had a lot of classical training and definitely brings a lot of new and different ideas in and I think everyone will get to see that on the new album. But I think people are in a band together because they do have at least some similar sensibility or something similar that they like in music. Otherwise they probably wouldn't have gotten the band together in the first place. ¶ Honestly, if I did all the writing, it would be boring. I need different input sometimes. And I do tend to have a very poppy sensibility and sometimes what the other people are bringing in helps to counter that with a cool bass line or a cool drum beat. I feel very fortunate that everyone I've ever worked with, we haven't always been exactly the same, but we've always complimented each other really well to make something cool together.



the HISSYFITS

WE THINK IN A RIOT GIRL TYPE OF WAY WITHOUT HAVING TO SHOUT IT—WE WHISPER IT AND HOPEFULLY IT'S COMING THROUGH.



What made you decide to add a viola player?

I always loved strings, cello and violin, but I never knew if it was something that could be a regular part of a rock/pop thing. But since I was revamping the lineup, it was a great opportunity to test it out. I never was interested in having a second guitar ever. I was really happy with the power trio kind of lineup — just one guitar, one bass, one drum. But I thought, if anything, it could be really cool to have something different; this really beautiful, swirling sound, which I think compliments the beautiful vocals as well. It's like another one of those contrasts where we don't have the normal wanky guitar but we have this other beautiful instrument floating over everything. So, we tried it and it clicked immediately.

It seems like you've gone through a lot of lineup changes since you formed in '96.

Yeah, back then it was just myself and I found a bass player and we—for the first year and a half that we were together—didn't have a real drummer. I don't know how we did it but, for the first year and a half, we were just playing out with random people. Somehow we kept it going and eventually got what became our permanent drummer a year and half later, and she was with me for the next four years. ¶ Then last year it became this whole new thing where I got a whole new lineup and added a viola player. We've been through a couple incarnations. We've grown and changed and developed, but I think it's always grown in a bigger, better direction every time. It's

been a really positive thing. Every person that has been with me has brought something fabulous and contributed something wonderful. It's been a growing, changing family that's always brought something great to the mix.

Do you feel the current lineup is more of a permanent one?

You always hope to be together as long as you can be together. But trying to do a group and have individual lives is difficult. Especially now, we have four people instead of three. The Hissysfits is a big part of everyone's lives and a priority, but you never know what's gonna happen. Someone might get married or move or something's gonna come up—you never know what life's gonna bring. But our hope is that we can stay together as long as we can, as long as it's good; as long as we're being creative.

Since your songs are so open and honest, do you ever think about how they'll be received or interpreted?

Yeah, when it's obviously about a particular person, I have a little bit of concern, a little bit of nervousness about if that person knows it's about them or what they think. But I don't worry about it too much. Ultimately, I have to do what I have to do. I feel like there's always a positive edge to all the songs, even if it's about disappointment. I definitely don't say anything too negative about anyone else, and I never name names. Live, it's scary to get up there

and say your feelings over a room full of people. But it's also very cathartic, so I'm compelled to do it.

It seems like your subject is more personal and not really political. Do you ever see that maybe the band would be interpreted as being empowering to girls?

Yeah, for sure—I hope we do! That's not my goal for doing music, but I hope while we're doing it, it is empowering girls and that we are good role models and are inspiring people to do things or to feel empowered. The message of being hurt or the feeling of being kept down or shut out of something, yet you're still standing, is definitely a very clear message of being a strong woman without having to literally come out and say it. I'm dealing with a lot of issues that modern women have to deal with. Issues of feeling what your place is in the world and the struggle between being a strong woman or being the ideal fairytale woman that you're brought up on. It's very conflictive and it's something we have to deal with every day. The issues of being included or excluded from certain groups or having to deal with things like being a mom or being an independent career woman—they're not easy decisions to make. And obviously relationship-wise, wanting to have the fairytale that you think is a possibility when you're a little kid and then realizing that it's not the way it is and being able to deal with that. But I think we're subtle about it. We think in a riot girl type of way without having to shout it—we whisper it and hopefully it's coming through. ©

THE MESSAGE OF BEING HURT OR THE FEELING OF BEING KEPT DOWN OR SHUT OUT OF SOMETHING, YET YOU'RE STILL STANDING, IS DEFINITELY A VERY CLEAR MESSAGE OF BEING A STRONG WOMAN WITHOUT HAVING TO LITERALLY COME OUT AND SAY IT.



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BLOWBACK

"For me punk is about rebellion—one's own path in rebellion whether

Testifying before Congress on human rights abuses in Guatemala, mon-keywrenching a Tom Clancy public appearance, working with the Killradio collective . . . it's a day in the life for maverick activist punk band Blowback ("blowback" is a military term used to describe an unintended consequence of a covert operation).

Earlier this year they uncovered documents in the Library of Congress that reveal the crass flipness of Army self-aggrandizement. One official Army memo from 1989 states that "If the Special Forces unit [is] deployed . . . to an airplane being held on the ground by terrorists, " . . . the terrorists would be dead and have left signed confessions, all the passengers would have suffered irreparable psychological damage, and all the women would be pregnant. The airplane would be unharmed, and the team would have taken no casualties."

In February, Blowback formulated this data into a mock program for a public appearance by war-monger novelist Tom Clancy titled "How Special Are the Special Forces?" and handed it out to the 900 guests at the event, many of whom were befuddled by the information provided, thinking it was an actual guide to the evening's event. Blowback then led activists in rounds of questioning to pin accountability for Army abuses on Clancy and fellow guest retired Gen. Carl Stiner.

The band's Chilean-American vocalist Carlos was a child of Chile's '73 coup. He ended up in the US at age eight and is still on Pinochet's ass with a current campaign for his indictment in the car-bomb murder of opposition leader Letelier in 1976. After 11 years as a lobbyist, Carlos left Amnesty International in 2001 to go DIY in his work on international human rights issues. Blowback is the collaborative venue for that work.

In between music and activism, guitarist Señor runs the Internet radio show Radio Blowback on Killradio (www.killradio.org), and bassist Bob is gearing up for a similar project in New York. On the radio show, they grill policy chiefs in interviews, and break listeners' ears with their music: old-school hardcore; aggressive protest music not suitable for the pop ear.

Blowback first got together in December 2000 out of a collective outrage over the stolen US presidential election. Since that time, the members have moved around but the band has stayed together: currently Señor is in LA, Bob and drummer John are in New York, and Carlos is in DC. They trade tapes cross-country and travel to get together for gigs. Last year they went into the recording studio to record their first few songs in New York on September 12. Overwhelmed by the power of the moment, they channeled that energy into creating a full-length album that day. The result is *Track III*, the first CD on their own label, String Break.

Interview by Megan Shaw Prelinger

What are your current political research projects?

Carlos: I think the next thing will be what we'll call *Blowback Briefs*, which will be an exercise in counter-spin. For instance, officials were saying that the September 11 attacks were hatched shortly after the bombing of the US Embassies in Africa. That's partly true. But what would be more accurate would be to say that the plot was hatched shortly after the US retaliation for those bombings, which consisted of cruise missiles shot into Sudan and Afghanistan. Why does this matter? Because if you recognize that the September 11 attack was a retaliation, then you also recognize that

there will be retaliation for the response to September 11. Which is why for once administration officials were telling the truth in saying that further terror attacks are inevitable. ¶ The main project we're working on as a band is the push for the indictment of former Chilean dictator Pinochet by the US Attorney for the District of Columbia. Pinochet must be indicted for his role in the 1976 car bombing in Washington, DC that killed the former Chilean Foreign Minister, Orlando Letelier, and his assistant Ronni Moffitt who was working for the Institute for Policy Studies. We've circulated petition letters at our shows and delivered them to the Chief of the Criminal Division for the U.S. Attorney's Office. We're still at it and hope in this way to help get Pinochet indicted, creating in the process, a grassroots network of committed activists.

With all the political work that you do, it seems strange that you would have left your position at Amnesty International. Why did you?

Carlos: Leaving Amnesty was both the hardest and the easiest thing I ever did. It was hard because I had a very nice, exciting, and meaningful job. When I left I was the Acting Director for Government Relations, that is, I was responsible for lobbying the US Government. I had spent 11 years lobbying on behalf of Amnesty, mainly on Latin America and Caribbean issues. ¶ But I noticed that Amnesty was becoming more and more obsessed with itself. I organized an event once and brought together the director of Casa Amiga, a Rape Crisis Center in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; her colleague in the US; and Rosalind Wiseman, who runs a cool outfit in Washington called the Empower

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one chooses to pursue an individual path or a collective path."

Program, working on issues of gender violence mainly with teens. My idea was to build bridges between the local and the international. The Amnesty person who spoke was so useless! I was so embarrassed. She spoke in Amnesty acronyms, only about what Amnesty was doing, and made no attempt to do *real* outreach. I was so disgusted. Over the years I became more and more impatient with what I call "Amnesty cheerleading." ¶ I also saw the senior staff become more and more corporatized, more preoccupied with fundraising and seeing AI's name in the headlines than actually doing human rights work. In my entire year as Amnesty's Director of Government Relations, not once did a senior manager ever ask, "What can we do to improve the human rights situation in country X? How do we make the lobbying you all are doing more effective?" Instead, it was all bureaucratic, fundraising, headline-chasing crap. ¶ I do think there are some great aspects of Amnesty. The Amnesty promise—that every individual counts, that people trump politics, that people trump ideology, that strangers *can* and *should* work on behalf of other strangers—all of those are important sacred principles. But unfortunately the corporate pirates at Amnesty have turned all of those beliefs into commodities. The only real hope for Amnesty is a rebellion from the grassroots.

Do you feel that the independent human rights work you are doing as a band is more effective than your work with Amnesty International was?

Carlos: No, because we are starting from scratch whereas with Amnesty I could always count on a few good activists. But let me emphasize that I mean *a few*. Amnesty's size in a way is a giant myth. It never contacts

their 300,000 or so members unless it's asking them for money. Shortly after September 11, Amnesty did contact all those people to send them what essentially was a sermon written by the executive director. But music is an incredibly powerful force and will give us possibilities that are out of reach for an organization like Amnesty.

Señor: With a band, you're going directly to the people and instigating change from the ground up. It provides unique opportunities to speak to large audiences such as the 50,000 people in DC when we played on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Carlos: I always need to remind myself that this is a work in progress, that all new ideas take a while to get off the ground. But it's based on grassroots ideas I've tried in the past which have worked very well, like giving real feedback to petitioners. And sure, nothing beats playing to a crowd of 50,000 protesters!

Señor: What we've been doing is tabling at all of our shows, and giving people tools to get involved. For example, we've been collecting signatures at our shows on letters petitioning for the repeal of the Patriot Act as well as the indictment of Pinochet. So far the response has been really encouraging. We've been hand-delivering these petitions to the appropriate people on Capitol Hill or the administration, and giving petitioners direct feedback on what happened.

How did you get involved in the connection between punk rock and Left activism?

Carlos: For me punk is about rebellion—one's own path in rebellion whether one chooses to pursue an individual path or a collective path. It is disaffected, it is alien-

ated. It believes that things are not right, that there are scams going on everywhere. It rejects the culture of lies. It rejects liars, whether they are the current Executive Director of Amnesty International USA or the spokes-clown of the White House. In a way, punk is more profound than Left activism. In another way, Left activism is more effective than punk.

Bob: Listening to The Clash really started me thinking about political issues with their lyrics, but I guess it really wasn't until I moved to DC and started seeing Fugazi play. They'd play for free outside next to the Capitol, or the Washington Monument or some small park, each show would be a benefit for a different worthy cause. They would always put on killer shows with great bands in support. That's when I saw how punk rock music and the punk lifestyle could be used as a legitimate force for change, to directly help people and causes and to get people involved.

John: Carlos hooked me up. I was transformed from a sweaty drummer to a leftist activist without even realizing it.

How would you characterize the kind of world you are working towards?

Carlos: Respect for life, moving away from anthropocentrism . . . Conscious . . . Aware.

Señor: Domestically, I'd like to see a significant third party. I think parties are crap but it would be a tangible, attainable step in the right direction.

John: A less political, more cooperative world.

Bob: One where people are more concerned for their fellow man than their bank account. ☺

When Fleshies rattled and rolled up in their faded blue van, I knew I was going for a ride—just not for how far. See, Fleshies aren't your run-of-the-mill punk band of bratty kids, crafting loud but mediocre tunes. They were blessed with smarts they didn't want; twisting their intellect into irony so they couldn't look at the world from any other standpoint. They stand among those lucky son-of-a-gun few—comedians, critics, a band here and there—that get paid to laugh at everyone else, knowing that it's often easier to make sense of life by making fun of it. And that's why Fleshies did this interview. That, and to fuck with me.

To fuck with me and lie.

Shit, their singer Johnny Pseudonym doesn't even hold to one last name. As much as you wouldn't expect him to get naked and cut himself up at live shows, neither would you suspect him of being as intelligent and clever as he is. And if you're doped up on cough medicine like I was, you probably wouldn't expect him to set up a band-wide joke on a journalist—a media farce that would also mock the music industry's hyped-up trends.

In that van's driver's seat was guitarist Mattowar; Johnny was in back, sandwiched between bassist Vonny Bon Bons, drummer Brian Hamiltro and some other bodies, and they were all in on the scam.

The band told me they were embarking on their next recording adventure: a sequel to their Alternative Tentacles album *Kill the Dreamer's Dream* and Adeline Records EP *The Game of Futbol* that was, in Johnny's words, "an electro-clash digital hardcore recording." They not only told me they added a DJ, but *introduced* me to him in the flesh: Scott Beibin, an actual DJ and independent filmmaker from New Jersey, present only for the sake of the joke. I was getting the inside scoop—I'd get to break the news first, they told me. I should have known—but I didn't.

And so, Fleshies, you may have bruised my ego a bit but now I know this ain't about me—it's just that your appetite for ridicule is insatiable.

Interview by Jenny Tatone

Illustration by Janelle

Could we start off by talking about the new album and the experience you all had writing and recording?

Johnny Pseudonym: We recorded *Kill The Dreamer's Dream* in June of last year. The *Futbol* EP we recorded last month, which is coming out soon. The electro-clash digital hardcore recording will be coming out in 2003—we gotta keep current.

Scott Beibin [*as the DJ*]: I don't think people are ready for that kind of kick on their sound system. Seriously, we're gonna fuck up so many PAs at DIY shows—they're not gonna be able to deal with the bass.

Johnny: Blast beats! Danger!

Beibin: It's a combination of speed bass and bongo, like Indian techno.

When did you decide this was something you wanted to incorporate into your sound?

Johnny: Oh, like a week ago.

Bon Bons: We realized it's what's *happening*.

Mattowar: It's part of the challenge to perform. We had cellos on the *Futbol* EP. There's gonna be some nice stuff on it. It's supposed to be a surprise, but you got the scoop now. It's gonna be hot. I'm interested in pushing any kind of envelope I can.

Johnny: Yeah, he works in the post office—don't fuck with him.

Mattowar: Post office?

Johnny: Matt's a postal worker. Danger!

Are you nervous at all about how it will be received? It's a bit of a change.

Bon Bons: What? That he's a postal employee, because of the anthrax?

Johnny: That whole thing's a scam that George Bush is pushing.

No, the sound.

Johnny: We'll see how they react to the cellos and we'll go from there

Mattowar: Yeah, we'll give them the cellos first.

Johnny: We have that coming up in the next few months and then from there, they'll just have to deal with it.

Beibin: I'm just gonna come out for the tours. They'll be able to handle a lot of the stuff. It'll go back and forth. Some of the stuff will be bizarre—like an Albatross—some of it will be more straightforward

when I'm not around . . . unless you guys find somebody else to do turntables.

Mattowar: We've already been talking to other people, for sure.

Johnny: There's the backing tape, too, that we're gonna try out—all Atari noise.

Beibin: It's not the same thing if it's not live. You can't just put a backing tape in because if the band fucks up, you really have to match the beats again.

Johnny: I'm talking about the layered noise—no actual beats, just huge horrible rafts of Atari and Nintendo noise.

Isn't that what The Melvins just did?

Johnny: The Melvins will *never* be bad. Every time I've seen them, they've just annoyed the living shit out of most of the people in attendance. It was *truly* awesome. If it's a Melvins audience, that's a different thing. But whenever I see them opening for other people, it's always a *total* annoyance scene—it's the best thing to see in the world!

Beibin: You know what band is gonna be so pissed that we sampled? We sampled His Hero Is Gone because they're so anti-technology. They're gonna be so fuckin' mad about this.

Bon Bons: Le Tigre is gonna be really upset about this new album, too.

Johnny: Yeah, we sampled some of their samples.

Is there an overall goal or dream that you're moving toward, or are you where you want to be?

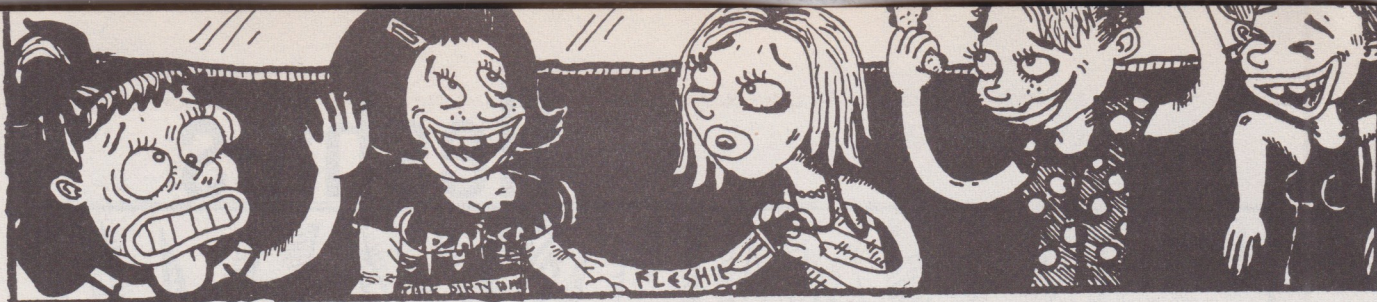
Johnny: My dream for today is to get some celery and some peanut butter and make myself a delicious meal. And my dream for tomorrow is to drive and then stop somewhere along the way and do the same.

Mattowar: These are the *only* people I've been able to play music with for an extended period of time. I've never had that happen before and it's an amazing thing. It's nice when you're able to build new things and create new things and push the envelope. So as far as the future and the big dream, it's just that we're gonna make some interesting shit and see what happens—throw some stuff against the wall and see what sticks. Ultimately, we're not gonna

fleshies



Fools suffer themselves gladly, and we sure do love suffering.



We just want to bring out your inner Lester Bangs.

rush anything because we're not gonna put out a piece of shit. Our next record is gonna be exactly what we want it to be.

Hamiltron: Personally, I think it's interesting to put records out on labels and everything but it has to be interesting for you or else there's no point. You could take a class and that could be more interesting.

Bon Bons: Our dream is to have fun. As soon as there's any expectations involved, you're gonna be let down, so it's good to not have any expectations and just have fun with it day-to-day.

Johnny: We're kicking Scott out tomorrow. He's gone. We're like a one band Vietnam.

Weeks later, the band cracked and fessed up with this e-mail: "Scott Beibin was wandering dazed in the desert outside of El Paso where he was left in a Texaco station bathroom by Fleshies. He was found by an undisclosed band, featuring several ex-members of At The Drive In, who promptly recruited him for their upcoming project scoring the soundtrack for 'Martha Stewart's Cribs.' Fleshies are reportedly still playing their electric guitars very loud." At this point, it seemed necessary to get back in touch.

So why do you wanna make a fool of me?

Bon Bons: You're no fool, we're just assholes.

Mattowar: We do a good enough job making fools of ourselves.

Johnny: Fools suffer themselves gladly, and we sure do love suffering.

Why do you lie?

Johnny: That is a fairly complex question, one that cannot really be simplified into a concise, straightforward answer. First, a definition of terms is in order: According to Webster's, "Lie" has 14 definitions, the first of which is "Lie [n] Trygve Halvdén, 1896-

1968, Norwegian politician and first Secretary-General of the United Nations [1946-1953]." Now, we can safely assume that this is not the definition you have inferred in this question, unless we want to search for a Lutfisk-ian subtext to the question at hand. The likelihood is that you would prefer a definition along these lines: "Lie [n] 1. A false statement deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood. 2. Something meant to deceive or give a wrong impression." As to the question at hand (i.e. why we—Fleshies, as an entity—choose to lie), well, that is highly subjective. First off, what would qualify as a false statement or a wrong impression? What *intent* (i.e., the "Why") is in mind should we choose to "lie" in this sense? The world is filled with lies—some intentional and planned, some not. Perhaps we should always remember that the truth—defined as a statement proven to be or accepted as true, a conformity to fact or actuality—is largely subjective, and highly conditional. Even in the supposedly cut-and-dry world of mathematics, all truths stem from essentially unproven postulates. What we wish to be true does not always bear through in reality, especially as it pertains to *intent* and the moment at hand. We all assume roles, which are, to varying degrees, true and false. When the actor assumes his role, much like a postulate, he effectively becomes the person he is portraying until judged and proven otherwise, and the burden of proof is always subjective when taken up by an entity other than the one being judged. ¶ At the moment in which, for instance, Scott Beibin was our DJ, he assumed a role that was, for all practical intents and purposes at that moment, entirely legitimate. The fact that we "hired" him at the beginning of the interview and "fired" him immediately afterwards is irrelevant.

Mattowar: I don't lie.

Johnny: He's lying.

Why do you dislike me so?

Bon Bons: I like you. We swam in the river together in Texas.

Mattowar: We must learn to like ourselves before we can learn to like others.

Johnny: "Like" is a strong word.

Do you struggle often with the paradox of wanting to get your music heard and not wanting to deal with the media?

Johnny: I love this shit. It's totally entertaining to me. No paradox here. Disinformation—however one may define it—does not equal avoidance. Just ask Ari Fleischer. Disinformation is an art, and yes, you can feel free to infer that we may or may not actually be in cahoots with "The Man" from that statement.

Or is it just me?

Johnny: We love you, Jenny Tatone. We just want to bring out your inner Lester Bangs.

What do you dream of? What keeps you going? What keeps you happy? And don't give me the, I've-got-peanut-butter-stuck-to-the-roof-of-my-mouth-so-I-can't-answer excuse!

Mattowar: I like to write music and tour. I dream of that and dirty things.

Bon Bons: I like to sweat. I like to scream. I like hanging with my friends and stuff . . . you know, the usual stoner answers.

Johnny: 1. Kittens. 2. Pure, unmitigated bile. 3. Caustic laughter.

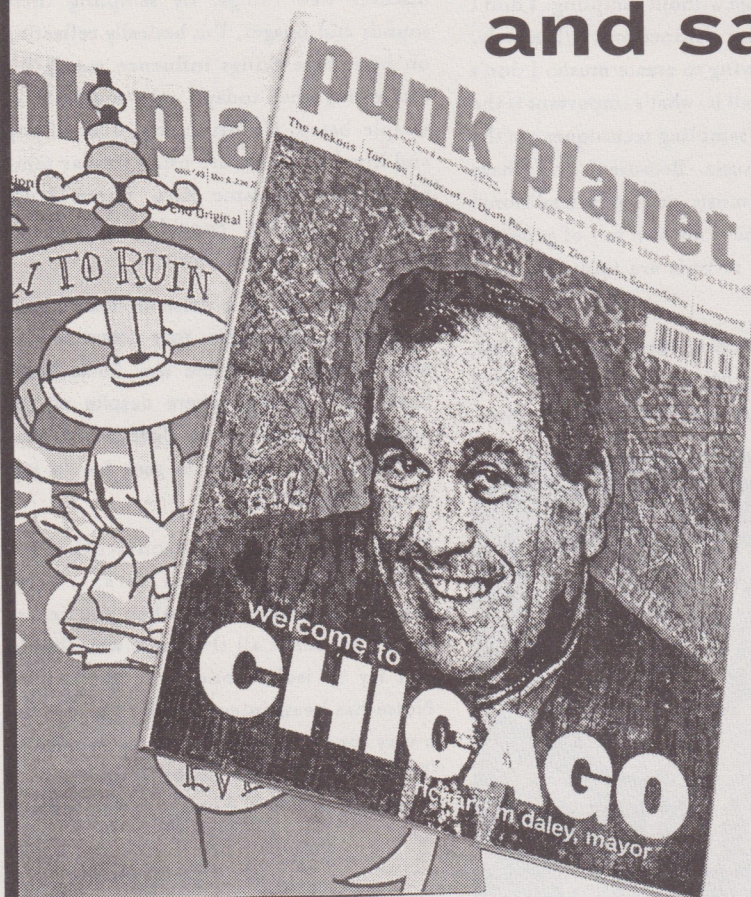
So the rest of the free world is doing it—are you gonna make that electroclash record or not?

Johnny: We decided to finish our BARRY MANOWAR record first. "Copacabana" is truly the most metal song ever.

Mattowar: What is electroclash? ☺

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Christian Marclay is a turntablist in every sense of the word. He plays up to eight turntables at once, uses a nail or a guitar string as a stylus, and even breaks records and glues them back together for a genuine sound collage. Marclay's work snaps you out of recorded music's escapist allure and makes you realize that the records, CDs, and tapes you've heard all your life are just noises reproduced by machines. Deeper than that, Marclay imitates many of our earliest encounters with recorded music by freely scraping, smacking, and destroying a spinning record, much like a toy turntable under the wrath of our infant curiosities.

For the past 23 years, Marclay has combined the anarchistic scopes of punk and composer John Cage with the remixology of hip-hop and musique concrete into his music and visual art. Instead of entering DJ tournaments to show off some slick, over-rehearsed "scratches," he remains in the NYC noise-improv scene with the likes of Sonic Youth and John Zorn, while concocting installations for galleries worldwide. Next summer, the UCLA Hammer Museum will present a retrospective of his visual work.

I met Marclay last April at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, which debuted "Video Quartet," a hypnotic assault of split-second Hollywood film clips that flash across four screens while their soundtracks bled into an uncanny symphony. After several delays from his touring and my college finals, I was able to interview him for a good hour by phone.

Interview by **Cameron Macdonald**

The other night I read a *Punk Planet* interview with Steve Albini, where he talked about the difference between "sample" artists and "collage" artists. He said that sample-based music is based on the structures of the samples, which are often recognizably taken from other songs, while a collage artist takes samples and manipulates them beyond recognition in fitting them in a larger work. Do you consider yourself a sample artist or more of a collagist?

You can't collage without sampling. I don't care about those distinctions. Ultimately, it's all about trying to create music. I don't care what you call it, what's important is the end result. My sampling techniques are the way I create music. Because I don't have skills to write music or play a traditional instrument, I have my own way of generating music and records are tools that help me do that.

In the same interview, Albini dismissed both types of artists as being merely editors and not musicians. Do you consider yourself a musi-

cian or an editor?

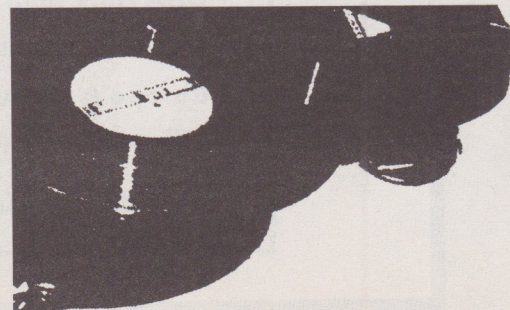
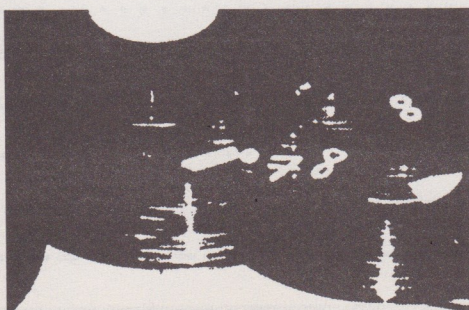
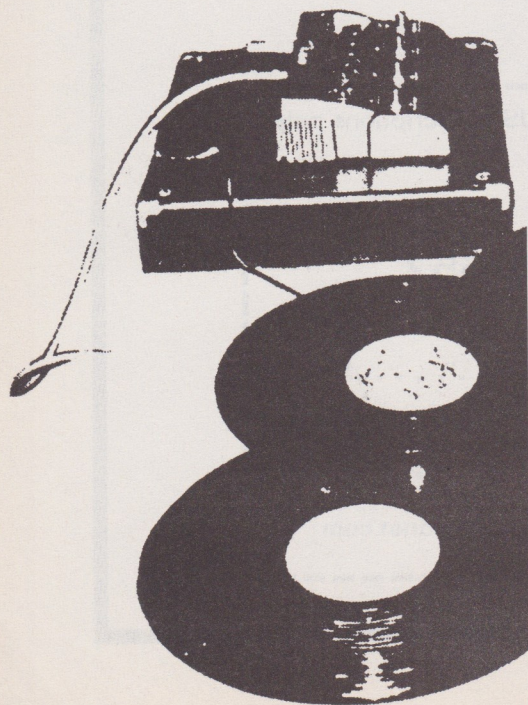
In the end what counts is the *music*. If you're enjoying it, that's great, if not, then move on to something else. Musicians use their knowledge to create music—if your knowledge comes from recorded music, why *not* sample it? Whatever is out there influencing me will eventually come to life in whatever I am creating, whether it's sounds or images. What's important is to explore and discover new things. By sampling these sounds and images, I'm basically reflecting on how these things influence me. ¶ It's interesting that today's pop music is so sample-based. Unfortunately, a lot of pop and hip-hop artists are using similar samples—if not the same ones. There is not much originality, considering the vast diversity of recorded music.

There seems to be a noise-for-noise's sake aesthetic to your music. Your violent scratch work reminds me of the way Sonic Youth treats their guitars—where despite all the high-art concepts behind their music, they still have the tendency to seek fun in just tearing shit up.

Noise is part of my environment. When you live in a city like New York, it's very present. You hear noise when you're listening to music all the time, why should you try to isolate one from the other? Noise has been integrated into music for a very long time—it's not something new. The Futurists were doing it in 1910. I think it's perfectly normal to integrate it



CHRIST



into music, instead of avoiding it. But that doesn't mean I don't also enjoy silence. [laughs]

When you began your career in New York in the late '70s, were you influenced by the punk and new wave movements during that time?

Absolutely. This was where I got my energy and inspiration for my early music. Punk rock was mostly played by people who were not trained. They created their own music with poor skills and it had originality. That do it yourself aesthetic was very liberating for me. I felt that I could also make music myself—I didn't have to go to a music conservatory. And so I started recording sounds from skipping records and using them as background tapes for this band I started with a guitar player, The Bachelor's Even. Punk rock was my introduction to music-making, and it was mixed with an interest in performance art. I was very intrigued by the work of Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, and Joseph Beuys.

Before you were introduced to punk, were you interested in using the turntable as an instrument?

I started using turntables in the late '70s when I was a student in Boston. That's where I started my first band. I just happened to have access to these Califone turntables. Records were cheap—thrift stores were full of them. You could find great stuff for 25 cents a copy. It was easily accessible stuff. I was always interested,

even in my visual work, in creating something new out of old stuff that I found.

Were you influenced by John Cage's early experiments with turntables?

I was familiar with John Cage's experimentation with recorded sounds and the use of nontraditional sound-producers like the radio and banging on objects. He was very influential in the sense that it allowed me to consider anything as a musical instrument. Any sound could be musical. I also knew about the *musique concrete* experiments with records.

It's interesting that you were getting into turntables at the same time as the growing hip-hop scene that was led by DJs Afrika Bambaata and Grandmaster Flash. Were you influenced by that community?

At the beginning, I was totally unaware of hip-hop. It was only after I moved to New York in 1980 that someone told me to check out the hip-hop scene. I saw Grandmaster Flash for the first time in 1981. It was influential in the sense that I liked their cut-and-scratch techniques, but I was less interested in the music than their turntable manipulations. One of the most revolutionary things that came out of hip-hop were 12-inch EPs made to be used by others to remix the music. These records were not just documenting a song, they were *tools*. It was very much this idea of an unfinished composition that was in flux and changing, that was revolutionary and

attracted me. Cage, *musique concrete* and hip-hop were some of the seeds for my first release, *Record Without A Cover* in 1985.

Physicality is definitely a major feature of your work. Some folks try to affect audiences through lyrics or music video images, while much of your music, like *Record Without a Cover* and *Footsteps*, is all about your and the listener's physical impact on the record itself. What inspired you to physically change records to the point of destroying them?

Most people think of a record as a way to capture sound and archive it for posterity. But I've always been conscious of the *fragility* of the record. Surface noise, skipping and all of those unwanted sounds that audiophiles reject, to me, became really interesting as potential sounds for creating music. I'm as interested in the sounds created by the vinyl and the turntable, as I am in the sounds recorded in the groove.

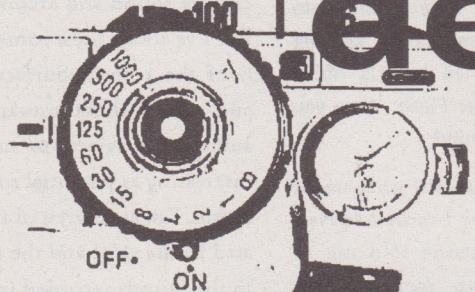
Overall, do you deconstruct sounds and images to defy something?

There is a defiance, in the sense that it's messing around with the recording industry's goal, which is to commodify music. I've always wanted to *use* records more than *make* records. Instead of the record being the end product of this whole recording enterprise, it is the *beginning* of a new chain of events. ©

IAN SURFACE NOISE, SKIPPING AND ALL OF THOSE UNWANTED SOUNDS THAT AUDIOPHILES REJECT, TO ME, BECAME REALLY INTERESTING AS POTENTIAL SOUNDS FOR CREATING MUSIC.

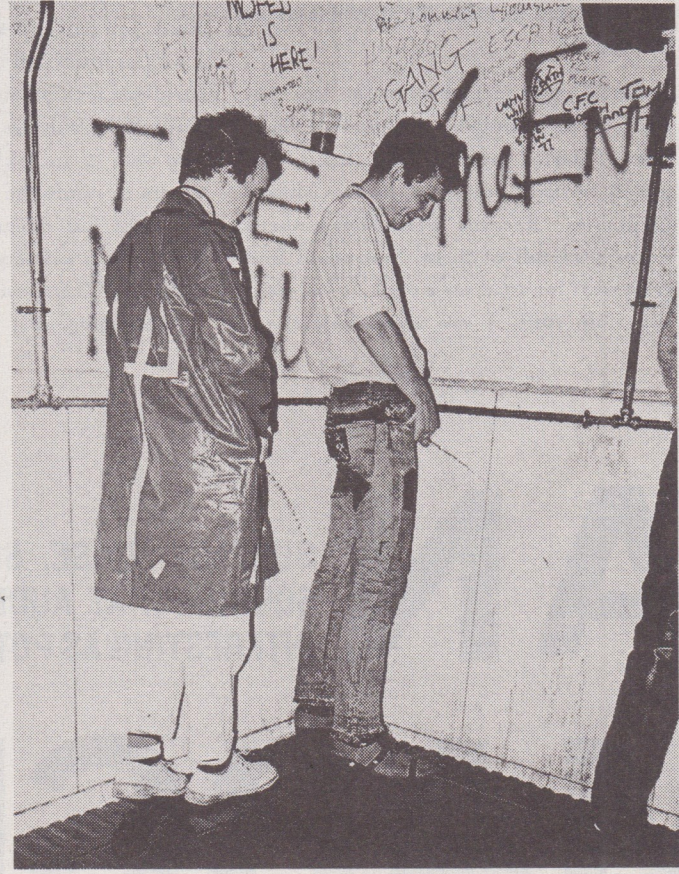
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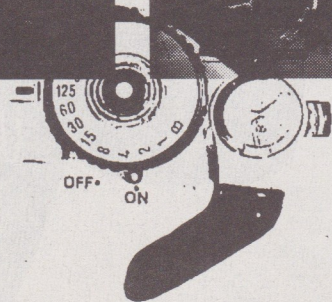
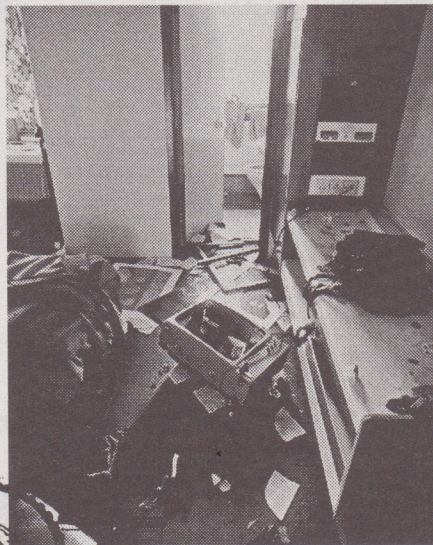
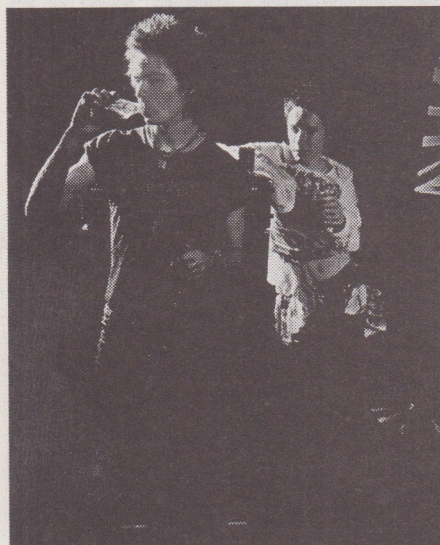
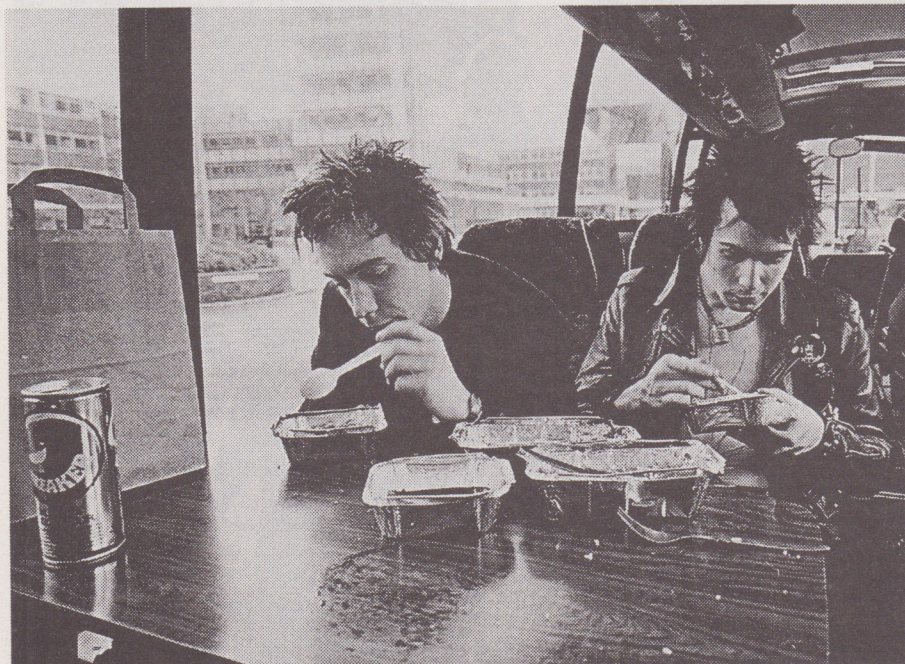
dennis morris

IT'S WHAT I AM: I'M A WITNESS.



All images are taken from *Destroy: The Sex Pistols*, 1977 by Dennis Morris, published by Creation Books, 2002, \$24.95. Available in all good bookstores or online at www.creationbooks.com. Reproduced with permission.





As a young man growing up in the East End of London, Dennis Morris was obsessed with photography.

After taking some pictures of Bob Marley during a soundcheck and then joining him on tour as the Wailers' photographer, Morris quickly got a reputation for being a professional. John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten), a Bob Marley fan, liked what he saw, and hired Dennis to be the tour photographer of the Sex Pistols. During this time, the Sex Pistols had no other official photographer; almost every picture of the Sex Pistols that you've ever seen was taken by one Dennis Morris.

During the time Dennis took these pictures, he described himself as feeling like a combat photographer, and the simile is apt. When you see Sid Vicious' note to Nancy carved into his chest, the various injuries of fans and Pistols alike, and the aftermath of a Pistols temper tantrum in a hotel room, it's clear that a war was being fought, and Dennis was determined to capture it.

Today, Dennis still splits up his time between photography and music. He produced MC Solaar's album, a documentary about hip-hop fashion, and photographed the Prodigy on one of their tours. I caught up with Morris in New York while he was promoting his book *Destroy* (Creation Books), a collection of Sex Pistols photographs, currently in its second printing.

Interview by **Evan Johnston**

Photographs are copyright **Dennis Morris**

How did you start taking photos?

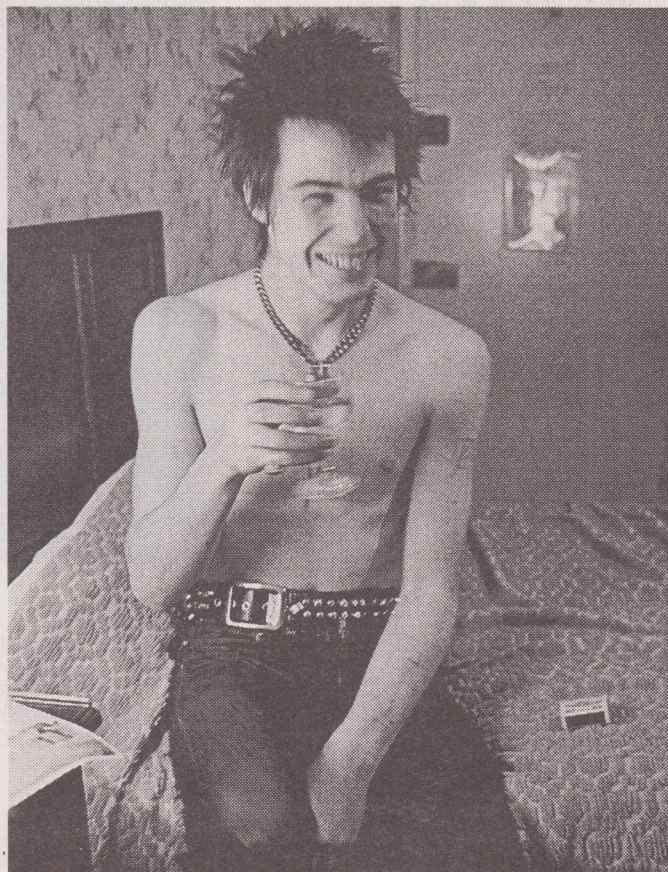
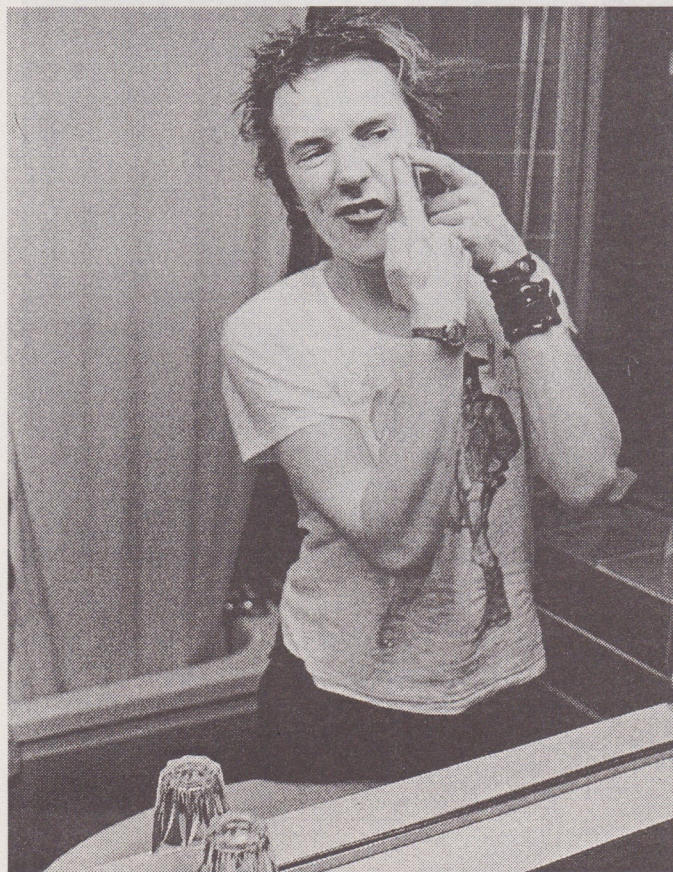
Basically what happened was I was in a church choir in the East End, which was like London's predominantly black area—like the Bronx or Brooklyn. I was in choir from about the age of eight. The vicar was white, the choir was black. He had this vision of choir boys dressed in suits. I think the suits cost something like 200 pounds. He couldn't really afford them, so he put an ad in the *Times* looking for a benefactor. There was this man, Donald Patterson, of Patterson Products—he made a lot of money, but he was completely dissatisfied with his life and he was looking for something. He saw the ad, answered it, met with the vicar, and he then became the benefactor to the church, bought the suits and started a photography club for the choir boys, amongst other things that he did. ¶ One time, when I was around nine, I went into the darkroom, saw one of the older boys take this paper, put it under the enlarger, switch the light on, then put it into the tray—which I thought it was water.

He rocked the tray and I saw this image come up. And I was like "Wow!" From that moment, I knew I wanted to be a photographer. From then on, I was always first in line for the cameras they loaned to the choirboys. Mr. Patterson saw my enthusiasm and he took me under his wing. ¶ When I got older, straight after morning service I'd change out of my suit, get a camera, and go down to Speaker's Corner, this famous place in London where people would go and talk politics, what was wrong with the world, culture or whatever. It was a great place to get pictures because you'd have all these characters—these complete nutheads and fanatics. I used to do that every Sunday, religiously, up until the age of 12. One time when I was down there, there was this PLO demonstration—it started noisy, then got bigger and bigger and bigger, and more and more violent. I had three or four rolls of film, so I took pictures until I ran out of film. I felt I had something, so I went down to Fleet Street [a street in London where many newspapers are based] because one of the things

Mr. Patterson told me was that if you thought you really had something, you take it to the newspapers. I went into one of these agencies—by this time they'd heard about the demonstration—and told them that I had been there. They developed the film, found something they liked, and paid me 16 pounds. I thought, "Wow, 16 pounds, I'm going to take this thing seriously." That's how I started.

From there you went on to photograph Bob Marley and the Wailers. As I understand it, Bob Marley saw you taking photos, took you aside, and invited you to go on tour.

Well, at that point I was an outcast amongst my friends, because I was just *obsessed* with photography. All my friends were playing football, or hanging out in the street, or getting into petty crime, whatever . . . I just wanted to take photographs. I also got into music. They thought I was a bit weird. ¶ My parents, like all western parents back then, were always playing the latest reggae music that came out of Jamaica, and there was this guy everybody was always raving about: Bob



Marley. His music really inspired me, and I'd read in *NME* that he was coming to play his first concert. So I bunked off school, went down to this club, hung around with my camera, and eventually he turned up with the Wailers. I asked him, "Can I take a photograph of you?" and he looked at me and laughed. He said, "Yeah, come in." They were doing their sound check, and for me it was like a dream: I was being a photographer. ¶ We started talking—he asked me what London was like for a young black kid, and I asked him what Jamaica was like. I'd never met anyone like him before. He was this very vibrant, strong, powerful rasta man; full of energy, full of confidence, telling me things like, "You can be anything you want to be, it doesn't matter who you are, the black man can be anything." Then he turned to me, asked me if I wanted to come along, and I went on the road with them for a few days.

From Bob Marley to the Sex Pistols; that must've been a huge contrast.

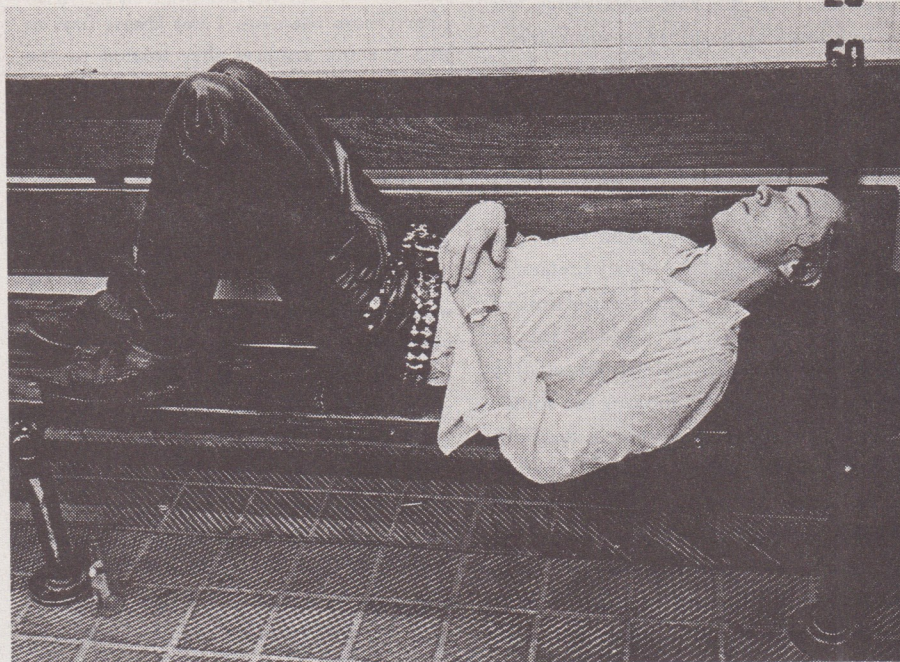
Not really, because at that point, around '76 or '77, Marley represented the new youth of Jamaica—people who wanted a piece of the cake. Punk represented the new youth of England—we wanted a piece of the cake too. So for me, it wasn't that strange. Both things were revolutionary, both things were a cultural revolution. It was what I was looking for, it was what I wanted; it was what *we* all wanted.

In the book you talk about some of the things you saw the Sex Pistols do—like the wrist-slashing contest between Sid, Johnny, and Rodent—I was pretty horrified. How did you . . . cope?

For me, it was all part of my thing. I had a job to do. I was the one with the camera. The photographer Tim Page told me that when he photographed the Doors, it was his private war. When the Doors split, he went to Vietnam—he had to find another war. There's no time to be squeamish, is what I'm telling you. Any chaos that was going down, it was my job to document it, to photograph it.

Has that been your attitude since the Sex Pistols?

It's what I am: I'm a witness. ©

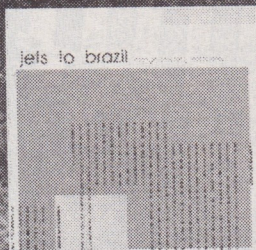


WELL, AT THAT POINT I WAS AN OUTCAST AMONGST MY FRIENDS, BECAUSE I WAS JUST *OBSESSED* WITH PHOTOGRAPHY. ALL MY FRIENDS WERE PLAYING FOOTBALL, OR HANGING OUT IN THE STREET, OR GETTING INTO PETTY CRIME, WHATEVER . . . I JUST WANTED TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS. I ALSO GOT INTO MUSIC. THEY THOUGHT I WAS A BIT WEIRD.

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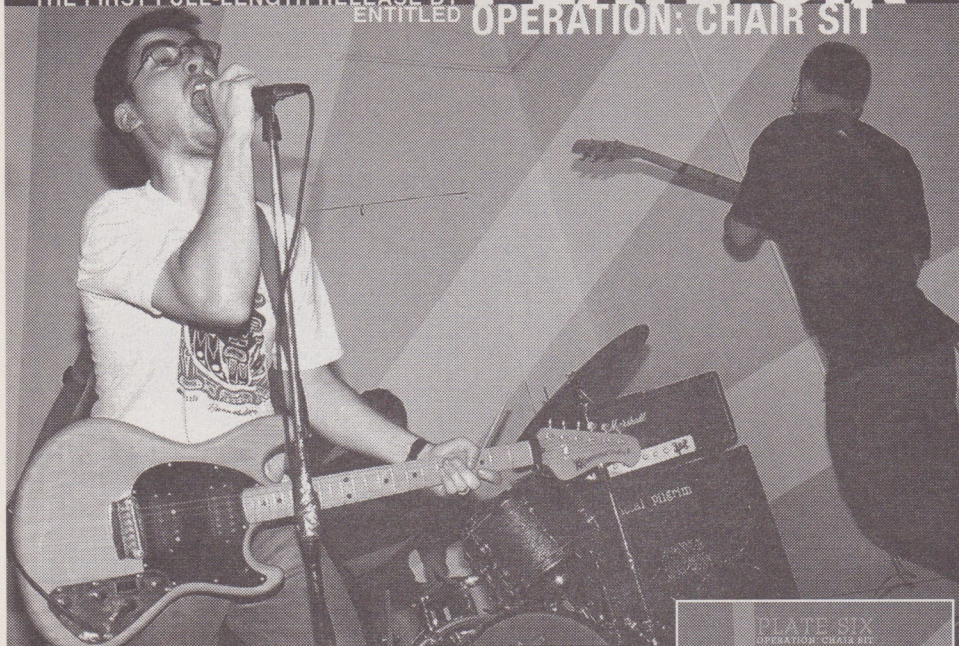
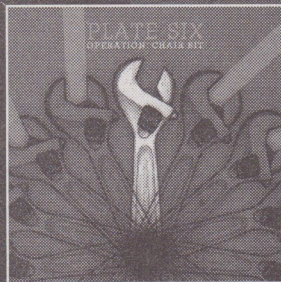


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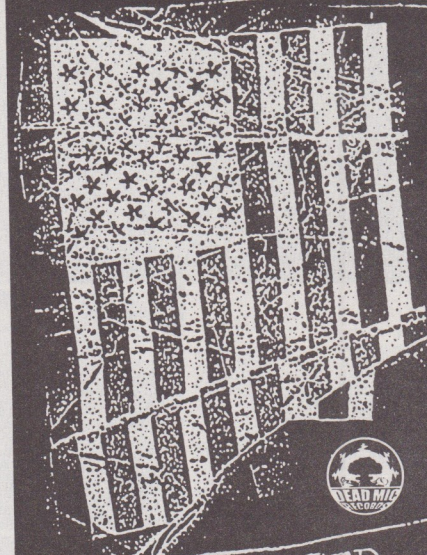
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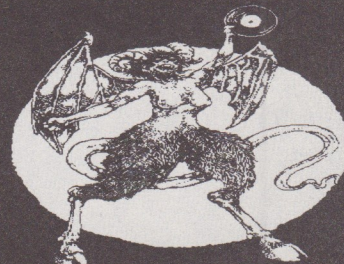
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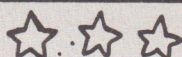


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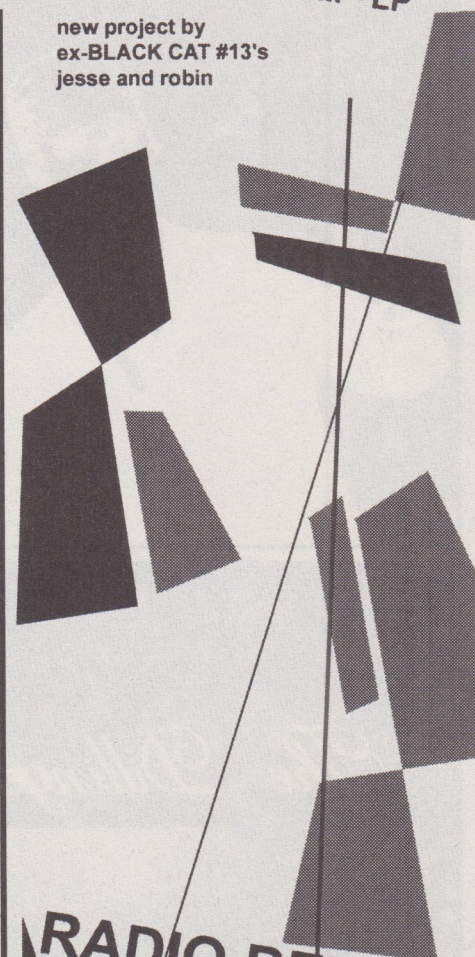
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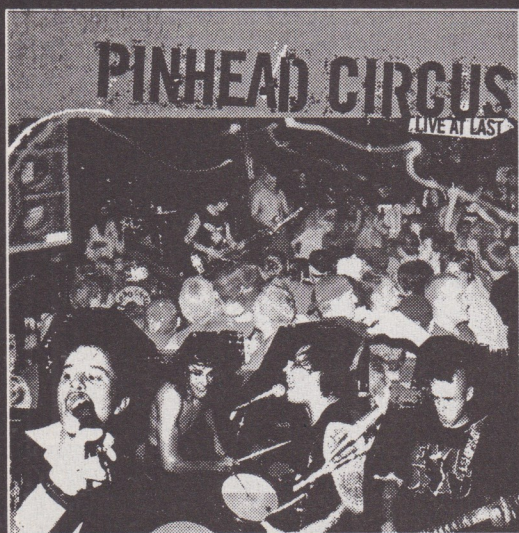
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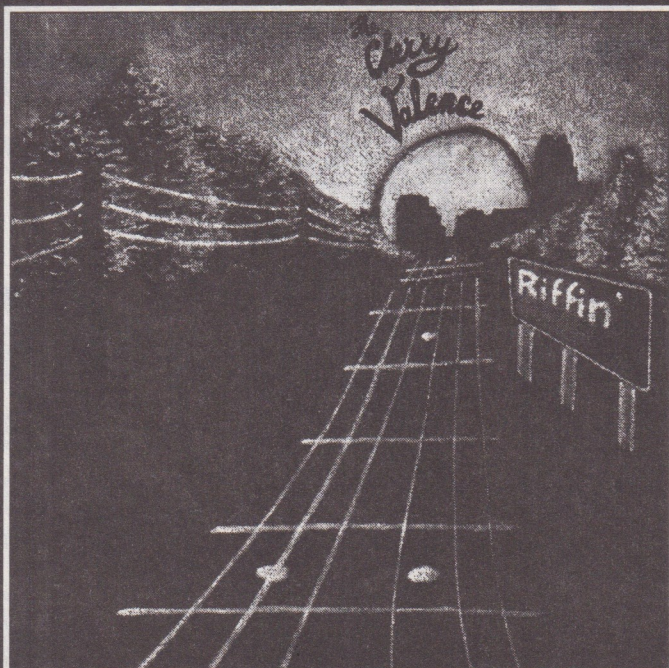
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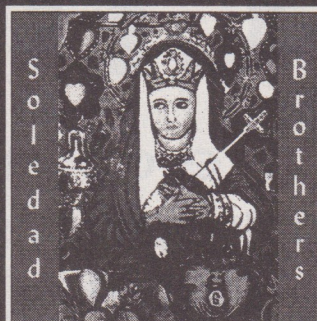
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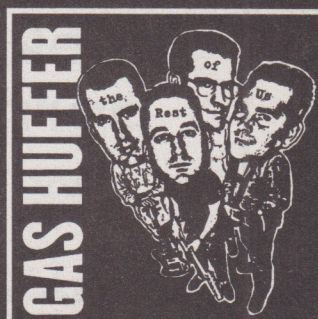
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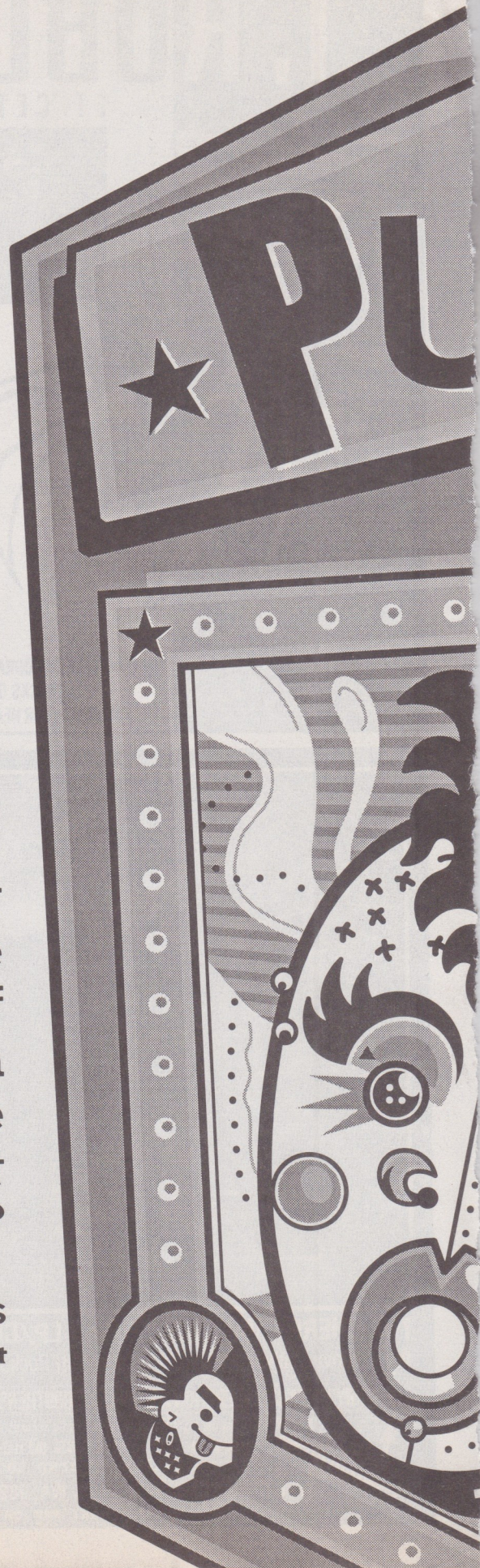
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A new wave of Internet pornographers have ushered in the era of “punk porn.” At \$9.95 a peek, they’ve got the porn part down. But where’s the punk?

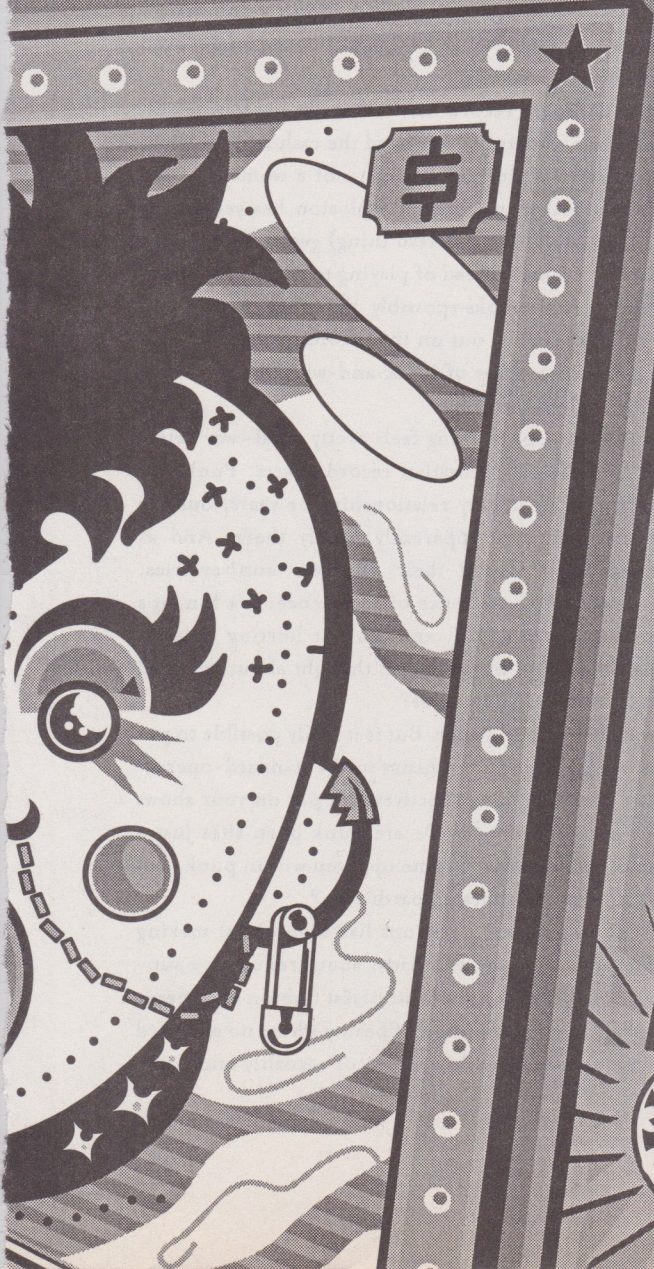
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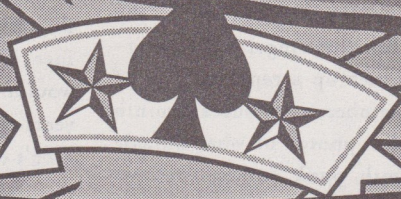
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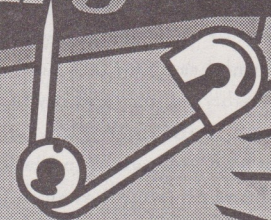
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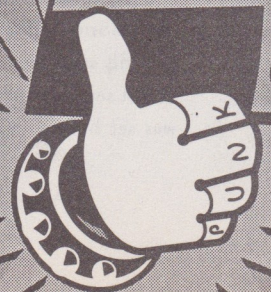
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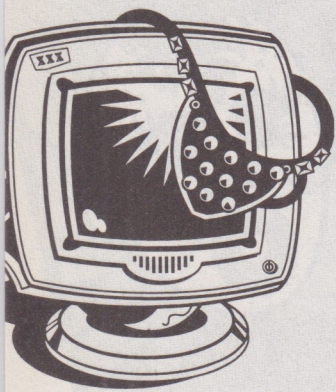


DIY
attitude!



When you start asking questions like that—about making easy a supposedly still-meaningful subculture to its basest fashion of beauty where no standard was set before; about playing maybe not really thinking it all the way through—you really

"Even if we're showing a girl with a cucumber in her kitty, the attitude here will always be different, and always be comfortable, and it will feel like a community, instead of a place where people go to jack off." —Morgan, Suicide Girl; posted on www.suicidegirls.com, July, 2002.



Posing is easy, says Hannah. By the end of her first photo shoot, she was trashed on whiskey ("it kinda settled my nerves," she laughs) and having a blast. And then she was naked. And then pretty soon afterward, she was naked on the Internet at Friction USA, one of a wave of adult websites selling what's basically—though no one wants to put it so bluntly—punk rock porn.

Women like Hannah—not her real name—are where the action is on sites like Friction USA, Burning Angel, and leader-of-the-pack Suicide Girls. The sites rack up a reported tens of thousands of visitors a day, charging members a few bucks a month to see thousands of crystal-clear color photos of what Suicide Girls call "the hottest, cutest, sexiest goth, punk, and emo girls we can find." And after only one year, these girls with pretty good hair and not-always-so-good-but-hey-we-all-liked-the-Misfits-at-one-time-too-right? tattoos have won more of an audience than *Punk Planet* or pretty much any little dirtball punk band (any dirtball little punk band not on one of those labels that has distro reaching into your local shopping mall anyway) has ever even approached. Punk has a new face now: probably young, probably white, and probably topless, and if you wanna see more, you better get out your credit card. And, says Hannah—a classy, statuesque woman who looks good in black, at least in her free sample pictures—it was no trouble at all.

Nobody's started stalking her; nobody's sending her creepy e-mails. About the most uncomfortable thing that happened was one of her co-workers gingerly asking, "So, I hear you're on a . . . web-site." And even that, she says, was no big deal.

"People think it's totally like porno, like guys on girls, and it's not really like that," Hannah says. "It's not all about, 'Oh, there are your tits!' If you're not comfortable with something, you don't have to do it—and having it out in public is no big deal. It's more creative than it is sexual."

And the part about skinny little punk rock boys point-and-clicking up her pictures with one hand down their pants?

"It'd be really funny," she says. "Better than them cutting ads out of Victoria's Secret catalogs."

So welcome to punk porn, the alternative to *Hustler*, *Barely Legal* and poor old obsolete Victoria's Secret: whether they're peddling erotica, smut, or just old-fashioned pin-up-style T&A, a wave of websites like Friction USA, Burning Angel, and Suicide Girls have carved out a cozy little spot in the punk consciousness, playing upstart little sister to a swollen adult-amateur industry and bringing punk style and—*maybe*—substance to one of the last unexplored forms of, um, creative expression.

They run like bedroom record labels, not like big businesses. The person behind the camera—and behind the cash register when you become a member—is more often than not a woman; at the shoots, the girls (the naked-punk-boys explosion has yet to hit, unless you wanna count the gay skinhead thing) get to do whatever they feel comfortable doing, instead of playing to some producer's idea of what's sexy. And punks—possibly the same punks who wouldn't put a zine called *Probe* out on the record-store shelves 10 years ago because it had a series of black-and-white boob shots—aren't even getting uptight about it.

Right now, this punk porn thing feels pretty good—way better than stroking it to Belle and Sebastian record covers. Punk and porn have had a strangely uneasy relationship for years, but the chemistry—and the money—is apparently finally there. And as everyone's websites strut toward their one-year anniversaries, there's still an almost-idealistic sense of innocence: it's fun, it's cute, it's clean, it's sexy, it's DIY, and it's not hurting anyone, right? Then why does it feel like no one's thought about the hard parts—well, besides *those* hard parts—yet?

Punk porn looks great on paper. But is it really possible to put punk into porn, fitting the adult industry to the standard-operating-procedure of the volunteer collectives that put on your shows and release your benefit records? Or are punk porn sites just a marketing scheme—and one that's come up from within punk, not trickled down from some corporate boardroom?

And when you start asking questions like that—about making easy money off a nation of alienated kids; about reducing a supposedly still-meaningful subculture to its basest fashion statement; about setting a pretty narrow standard of beauty where no standard was set before; about playing with the idea of sexuality and com-

money off a nation of alienated kids; about reducing statement; about setting a pretty narrow standard with the idea of sexuality and community and feel like a total dick.

munity and maybe not really thinking it all the way through—you really feel like a total dick. But punk porn begs the obvious question: once you strip a girl naked and charge \$9.95 to peek, you've already got the porn part down. So where's the punk?

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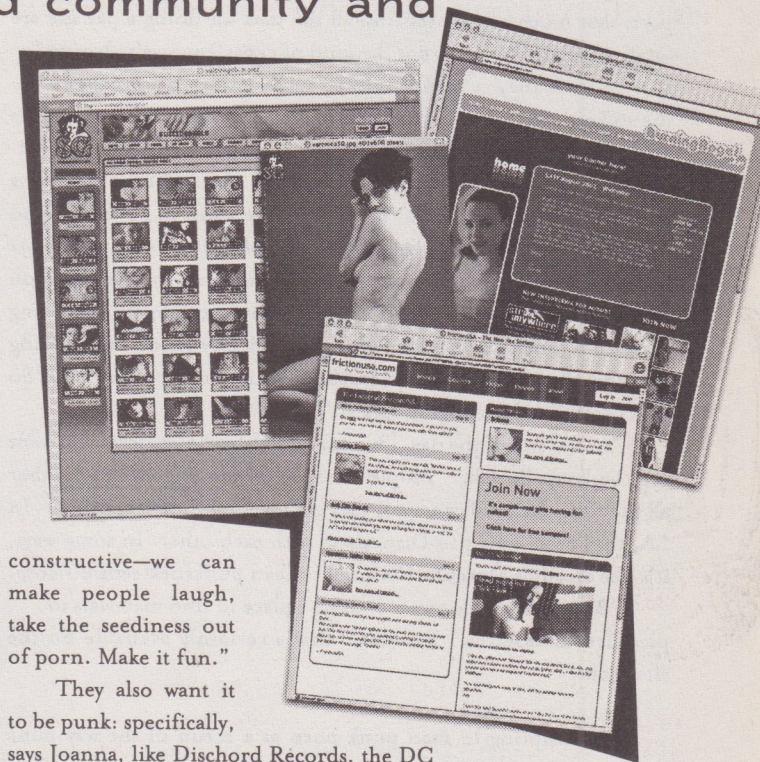
"You'd be shocked," says Spooky, who runs Portland's Suicide Girls with his partner Missy. "First of all, I don't sleep with any of the girls. I don't touch any of the girls, *period*. We do have parties for the girls, but the girls just chit-chat, drink, and have fun. There are no orgies. No sex parties. No gold Ferraris or giant jacuzzi tubs. I spend most of my day answering e-mail, doing tech support . . . there's nothing decadent about the business."

Poor John Holmes is probably rolling in his grave, but the word from Suicide Girls HQ is that being at the new edge of pornography isn't actually very, well, porn-y. In fact, Spooky and Missy tend to shy away from the word "porn," anyway ("I refer to it as a pin-up girl site," Missy says). Instead, webmasters tend to use a whole new vocabulary—and a whole new set of reference points—when it comes to talking about what they do. It's a handy way to see where these new pornographers—who hate everything Pamela Anderson stands for; who (except for Porn For Punks' ex-adult-webmaster-and-current-adult-bookstore-employee Jack Sordid and a handful of experienced models) never really had much contact with the adult industry beyond a valued-customer level—get their ideas about what they want their porn to be: "We're hoping to raise the bar on porn," says Burning Angel's co-owner and managing editor Joanna.

First, they want it to be different than the porn they've already seen. They want it to be clean. To be smart. To be female-friendly ("You never see the word 'slut,' you never see anything about how we tricked a girl into giving us blowjobs," says Spooky. "There's nothing disparaging ever said about any of the girls. We try to stave off objectification"). And they want it to be—in a lot of ways—like the trendy website Nerve.com, which blazed a trail that punk porn sites, intentionally or no, seem happy to follow by buttressing their photos with articles, band interviews, and even message boards.

Even if they can't relate to Nerve's snarky sensibility (Spooky thinks it's too Sex-in-the-City; Joanna actually interned there) they appreciate the new front-end that Nerve attached to Internet porn. And they want to make it their own:

"Porn is an inevitable thing, but I think we can build a better model," says Jake, administrator at Friction USA. "One that's more



constructive—we can make people laugh, take the seediness out of porn. Make it fun."

They also want it to be punk: specifically, says Joanna, like Dischord Records, the DC label whose take-care-of-your-own integrity finds echoes in Burning Angel's collectivist organizational structure or Suicide Girls' hire-from-within employment policies that puts models to work as HTML programmers or office managers.

"It's how I know how to do things," explains Jake. "I've done an indie label, I've done bands forever. It's not like we're trying to do 'punk rock.' This is just our porn site."

And of course they want it to turn a profit, but (apropos to those punk-y business ethics) a profit that's fair for everybody involved. Nobody likes to talk numbers, but the payment a model receives for a photo session seems to be somewhere between what you'd make working for 8 hours at McDonald's and what you'd need to make rent for a month in the Pacific Northwest; it's probably a few hundred shy of the \$1,000 or so you might make for shooting a porno down in LA, but still it's

respectable. And as for site revenue?

"We're doing well," says Joanna, a cheerful but cagey attitude that's pretty much the party line when it comes to specifics. But she did quit her waitressing job. And Jake quit his job. And Spooky and Missy work on their site full time, as well as pay a half-dozen employees. Obviously, *something's* paying the bills.

"Adult webboards say don't do a site like ours," says Friction USA's Jake. "They say don't do a pay site because people don't pay for porn that much any more. And all the stats for doing a pay site are totally dismal. But that's not the kind of experience we're having."

Instead, they've tapped into an audience that's more than willing to keep them in the black—maybe because webmasters like Jake and Stephanie and Spooky and Missy are their own target market. You can't get much more in touch than that: as a woman, says Friction USA administrator Stephanie, she wants to be able to find images of beautiful women that aren't offensive; as a man, says Spooky, you'd want a woman to enjoy sex—so why wouldn't you want her to enjoy porn? What's most important, they say, is putting form to a fantasy not included in the industry vision and making sure that the models have the freedom to do whatever they want. So don't call them pornographers—it's so *limiting*.

"At the end of the day, [Suicide Girls] can be whatever you want it to be," says Spooky. "People hook up on our site with each other all the time. In San Francisco, they get together for curry dinner. In LA, they're all going to Disneyland with each other. In some ways, it's like an adult MakeOutClub rather than punkrockteensluts.com."

"But if people just want it to be a place to find materials to . . . pleasure themselves," he adds, "that's certainly available on the site, too."

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It's tempting to read punk porn as a rerun of the way punk itself started: a bunch of maverick kids knocking a tottering industry on its ear—or in this case, ass—by cranking out stubbornly honest and intense music (or porn, *whatever*) that made up its own rules as it went along. But that's not really what happened. Instead, punk didn't get naked until way after the party got started, lagging behind an armada of geekgrrrls with webcams. The do-it-yourself methodology and female-inclusive aesthetic of punk porn sites may fly in the face of the creaky old mainstream adult dinosaurs, but it's old news on the 'net.

Call it proto-punk porn: by the late '90s, there was a new wave of living-room smut merchants putting their friends on the web, a breed related to, but somehow distinct from, established amateur pornographers. Cloei has run Boston's Nakkid Nerds since 1999, two years after tumbling first into stripping and then into web porn when she desperately needed to make some cash. She tells the same story that you'll hear from a lot of DIY 'net pornographers—sick of industry sleaze, unsatisfied by industry porn, set to do it her own way—but she tells it with more style. Her sexy-naked-smart-chicks site—"the largest sex organ is the brain," she says, "people forget that."—doesn't mention punk once; it doesn't need to.

"If you're going to look at punk as a little subculture like hip-hop and goth and crap, then no," she says. "But if this magazine is actually about what it's *supposed* to be, then it's all about doing things

on your own and having a meaning for something and doing it your own way, rather than just, 'Oooh look, I have spiky hair and bad teeth, I'm punk!' I think it's being innovative in your own field, taking it into your own hands and doing it—which is pretty much what I did."

Florida web designer Jennifer Ringley may have been the first: in 1996, she set up a camera in her bedroom and a website at jennicam.org, transmitting a little skin and a lot of regular daily life to anyone who cared to watch. And a lot of people wanted to watch—USA *Today* called her "one of the only people to achieve celebrity solely through the Internet." It wasn't all that explicit, as web sites go, but the idea was throbbing with potential.

The subsequent cam explosion took amateur to its most DIY level: one girl, one cam, one credit-card account; then do as much or as little for your audience as you can sell. But it took about three years to specialize even further. In 1999, a guy named Killshot thought he had a fun way to learn a few things about programming HTML; what his Raver Porn site really gave the world was a *Never Mind the Bollocks* for anybody with a digicam, a dedicated server and a female friend with weird-colored hair. Here was the proof that anyone could make anything they wanted; here was a challenge to go do it yourself.

"It got a lot of attention right away because no one had ever seen anything like it," Killshot says. "And I'm really glad that I was able to maybe help inspire some people to do these kinds of sites. I really hope that this can show the porn industry that porn doesn't have to be nasty, that women like porn just as much as men so long as it's done in a respectable way, not advertising, 'Hot Russian Teenage Cum Sluts That Want Your Rock Hard Cock!' And that porn can be really interesting and fun, not just for people to get their rocks off."

This is where punk porn fits in, nestled against—and borrowing from—the old wave of DIY amateur sites like Cloei's Nakkid Nerds and Killshot's Raver Porn, offering the viewer a seductive fantasy of "reality" and the artist—or performer or talent or whatever—control to an unprecedented degree. Without hassles like printing costs, office rents, and manipulation by a handful of monster distributors, alternative DIY porn can thrive on the Internet because the risks are a lot less intimidating against the rewards. For Cloei—a self-described "control freak"—that's what's really exciting.

"Very, very few people in porn have something called 'ethics and morals,'" says Cloei. "There's always an ulterior motive. It's just icky. I worked for a lot of companies and they don't treat you very well when you have a brain or are a girl. I'd say, 'You need to do this,' and they'd say, 'You need to be quiet.' So I finally gave up and started out on my own."

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Maybe porn pulls in three billion a year on the Internet. Maybe it's \$10 billion. Maybe it's just \$185 million. When it comes to pornography (as opposed to pornography, right?) the science is still inexact. But there's money out there, and most of it, says Rebecca Gray, associate editor for the CNN-for-the-porno-set *Adult Video News Online*, is in something called *niche* pornography. Which is where you'll find the naked punk girls—somewhere behind "mature,"

"outdoor," "latino/Hispanic," "BBW" (which means "big-breasted women," kiddies), "ebony" and "hardcore," the top-sellers as of last year, according to a charming website called PornResource.

"There are a handful of big companies on the web, doing it like a big-business machine, and then there are hundreds of one-person-band-type websites, some of which have been around for years and others that last weeks, and all of which are lucrative after a fashion," explains Gray. "It's harder to lose money with this kind of small Internet operation—less time and money need to be invested for any kind of return—so there's very little downside to jumpin' in and then jumpin' right back out!"

And that makes it practically easier for newbies and outsiders—like Nakkid Nerds and Ravers and Suicide Girls—to crack the traditionally exclusive adult industry. Every time the means of production gets cheaper and better, it pries pornography out of the hands of the producers—the dying breed of Boogie Nighters that kept the Southern California coke-runners in business—and puts it in the hands of the people, says Heather Findlay, editor in chief of the pioneering dyke-run alt-porn magazine *On Our Backs*.

"Technological advances and new media in the past have had a democratizing and feminizing effect on porn consumption," Findlay says. "The last major technological innovation was video, and before video, porn was a 100 percent man's world—men made it and men watched it. But once adult films were on video, women could discreetly rent them to watch at home. Now women are like one out of every four renters of adult videos."

Naturally, the Internet is having the same effect, putting a few more nails into the graying mainstream stroke-mag industry

"I worked for a lot of companies and they don't treat you very well when you have a brain or are a girl. I'd say, 'You need to do this,' and they'd say, 'You need to be quiet.' So I finally gave up and started out on my own."

—Nakkid Nerds' Cloei.

("There is no future for adult business in mass market magazines," Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione told a London newspaper after circulation dropped 90 percent) and a few more different faces on the other side of the screen. And that's where niche pornography sprouted up—right between the cracks.

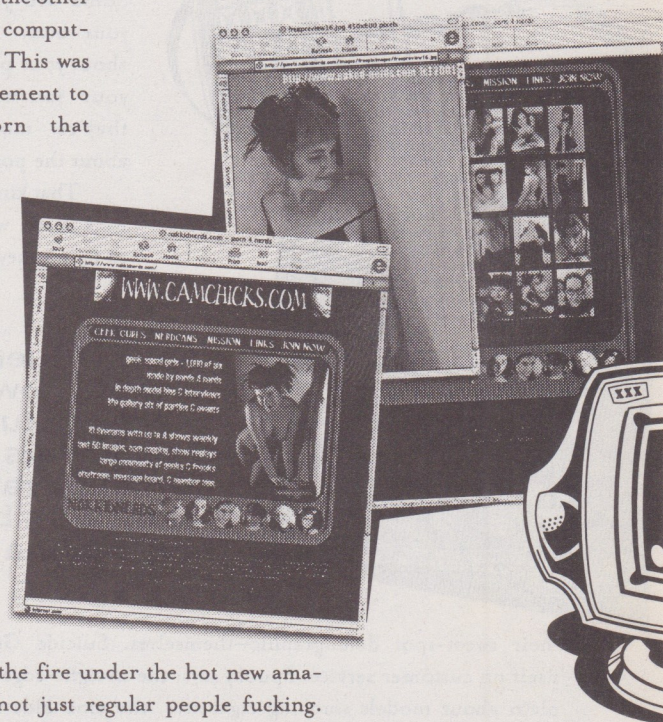
"Niche is the word in adult Internet and has been for at least a year and a half," says *AVN Online's* Gray. But that there's a generation of video-gamin', skateboarding, porn-watching consumers who have reached the age of legal purchase is what's behind the alt-punk-porn-site boom. I think of this, however, as less of a niche and more of a trend.

"For the most part, 'niche' calls to mind pissing, feet, (or nylons or what-have-you), 'mature' women and the like," she explains. "That people in their 20s have an aesthetic, a sensibility that is generally not met by your father's porno is a moneymaking proposition that's been a hue-and-cry for people of that age in the industry since at least 1997, when video-side boy-mogul

Matt Zane started yelling real loud about the Gen X he served/exploited in his product. He was not alone."

Zane—the son of established porn magazine Chuck Zane—put out series after series of *Beavis and Butthead*-style videos like *Backstage Sluts* and *Young, Dumb and Full of Cum*, featuring cameos by Gen X tastemakers like Sugar Ray, Limp Bizkit and the Insane Clown Posse. And while it's a long way from Sugar Ray to Suicide Girls—one would hope, anyway—Zane had still stumbled onto a renaissance.

He popularized the idea that you could repackaging amateur porn for a demographic, not just a fetish; that you could dress a girl up in a subculture at the same time you got her to take off her clothes; that people would pay for the idea that they somehow had something in common with the naked person on the other side of the computer screen. This was the complement to niche porn that



really put the fire under the hot new amateur: it's not just regular people fucking. It's people like you.

...

"The audience," says Missy Suicide, "is people who look like the girls. They've got the same attitudes and the same interests as the girls on the site. It's not designed for the typical porn user, some 56-year-old man who's divorced or something."

Of course, any web pornographer will admit that there's no way for them to be exactly sure who their audience is. But Suicide Girls' and Friction USA's message boards

offer pretty convincing hints: user profiles feature the same sort of indie-Internrrrds that frequent personals sites like MakeOutClub and LiveJournal, counterpointing ironic hipster tastes with professed interests including "college music girls tattoos" and "hot chicks and guitar licks."

But there's no reason members have to post—particularly if they're going through the site with only one hand on the keyboard. And with the adult industry pulling from wildly different demographics—one video company reported 700 million video rentals a year to the *New York Times*, surmising that it couldn't just be one million perverts renting 700 videos each—it's a little inaccurate to try and pin down the "typical porn user." So who's paying to look at all these naked punk girls?

"Sometimes you just get letters that are short and weird," explains a Suicide Girl named Chloe. "'I like your pictures. You have nice breasts.' But sometimes they'll be like, 'Oh, you like the

Blood Brothers? Check out these bands—you have good musical taste!' Some are just about your body, some are about your profile and your journal posts—they're more often about the posts."

That kind of feedback leads webmasters to figure they're hitting

munity—rather than piece-of-ass—feel that characterizes the kinder-gentler approach a lot of punk porn tends to take. For a subculture that once could have laid claim to women like Lydia Lunch and Wendy O, the visuals skew a little tame. Though boys make appearances on edgier sites like Pennsylvania's Porn for Punks and California's Punk Erotic and are scheduled to start showing up as Suicide Boys and Burning Boys, the bread-and-butter of punk porn is young female models. And since so many of the girls on the sites are modeling for the first time ever (or so the story goes), they tend to stick to the vanilla stuff: a lot of T&A; a lot of full-frontal; maybe a little girl-on-girl petting.

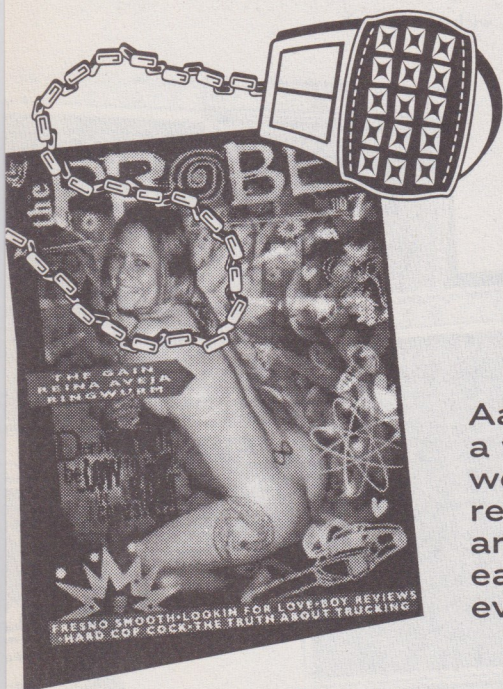
Of course, paying members get more: Porn For Punks will happily sell you pictures of off-duty dominatrixes pissing in their own mouths, for instance, and even Suicide Girls—the models, not the administrators—were debating whether or not to take the plunge into penetration shots. And members were telling them to do what they were comfortable with. Maybe that's the punk. And maybe that's what people are paying for—to be a part of something, too. Because feedback, even if it's anonymous, is almost always positive.

"I think people were concerned it was going to be, like, 'Punk Sluts Fucking For Punk Rock Records' and it would be very demeaning and degrading to women in the scene," says Spooky. "But when they see that the girls want to do it, they're much more accepting of it. It's all in the execution."

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Aaron Muentz—who hasn't been called Aaron Probe for a while now—finds it kind of funny that there are whole websites full of naked punk girls on the Internet now. He remembers one poor

Aaron Muentz—who hasn't been called Aaron Probe for a while now—finds it kind of funny that there are whole websites full of naked punk girls on the Internet now. He remembers one poor desperate kid in Idaho carrying around a ratty copy of *Probe* zine around for most of the early '90s because that was all the naked punks he was ever gonna see.



their sweet-spot demographic—themselves. Suicide Girls prides itself on customer service, Spooky says: the straight-edge kids complain about models smoking cigarettes, the emo kids want more photos of sad-eyed girls, the punk rock kids want to see more tattoos and spiked collars. It's the already remarkable responsiveness of porn—an industry that tries to harness trends, rather than set them—at a lightning-fast micro level, and it's testament to the power inherent in selling a subculture to itself. If there are old men wanking it to punker chicks, they're keeping quiet.

"Are there a couple 40-plus rain coaters out there shaking their heads and jerking off while surfing these images?" asks Rebecca Gray. "Why not? But mostly, the audience is targeted—specific. You. Me."

Suicide Girl Chloe says she feels like she's a part of something, rather than a piece of something; it's a sentiment members paying to access these sites might agree with. And it's that part-of-a-com-

desperate kid in Idaho carrying around a ratty copy of *Probe* zine around for most of the early '90s because that was all the naked punks he was ever gonna see. And Muentz remembers the huge shit-storm that settled on his doorstep once he casually tossed a few topless pictures of a girl (and later some naked guys) in the first issue of his zine, becoming one of only a handful of people who've tried—after a fashion—to marry punk and porn.

"It doesn't seem that long ago, but the attitude in the punk scene was kind of different to nudity than it is now," Muentz says. "I started by accident and it ended up being my crusade. You had the Christian value system coming at you from one side and then you had the politically correct thing. More often than not, people were for it—but when they were against it, they hated your guts."

He was accused of getting girls drunk and tricking them into posing; of exploiting women and exploiting the scene. People wrote

letters to *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll* calling for boycott; a clerk at Berkeley's Amoeba Records pulled the mag off the shelf. But he also remembers bringing a box of 60 hot-off-the-presses copies to a show and selling every single one in seconds. And until now, that was pretty much how punk porn was going to work: at the basement show, they'll hate you; but in the bedroom? It's usually a different story.

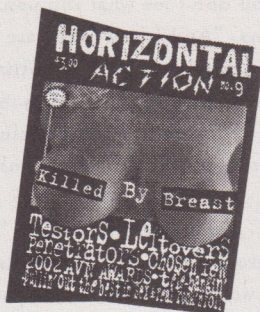
For all its pretension to telling prevailing societal convention to fuck off, punk has some contradictory ideas about sex and sexuality; early on, you could turn tricks on 53rd and 3rd or do a little dom work on the side, but the really outlaw sexual expression got rolled under the rug by the mid '80s or so. They might have called the music hardcore, but the sex scene stayed pretty

frigid—funny, if you ever bothered to look up what “punk” originally meant. But like early punk, early punk porn was comparatively abrasive and intense, rubbing up against the queer scene, the fetish scene, even the avant-garde art scene. Maybe that's why it never really penetrated to the more mainstream sectors of the music.

In the early '80s, a gay skin mag in LA called *In Touch* hit up Henry Rollins for some sexy shots and asked him what he thought of his gay following (for the record, he said he was very flattered). Richard Kern and Lydia Lunch fist-fucked formulaic mainstream porn with films like *Fingered* and *Right Side of My Brain* as part of New York's no-wave film scene at roughly the same time. By 1992, Rock Out Censorship's Randy Lee Payton proclaimed there was a “new wave of free sexual expression,” spearheaded by zines like Lily Braindrop's *Taste of Latex* and Dew U Care's *Slut Mag* (somehow, *Probe* got left out). Somebody put some punk bands—Fat Wreck Chords ones, if memory serves—in some cheesy videos back in the mid '90s and *Probe* even got online—sort of—at punkrocksex.com, a woefully underutilized site. And Annie Sprinkle was post-porn before post-porn was anything but a joke between grad students. But there's never been breakout punk porn—like thousands of visitors a day punk porn, a *Maximum T&A* or a *Porn Planet*—until now.

“It says more about porn than it does punk,” says Spooky. “I look at myself as a punk rock guy doing a little porn. I mean, porn is so much better accepted now than it was. You can watch an episode of *Friends*, and Monica's renting a porn video for Chandler. Would you have seen that ten years ago on *The Cosby Show*? The mainstream is more accepting of adult content, and probably every subculture is more comfortable with it now. We just happened to be punk rocker/goth kids. This is the only thing we know.”

And they didn't just know what punk rocker goth kids would want to look at—they knew, it seems, that they were ready to look at something pornographic in the first place. Muentz says it's hard for him to convey to kids now just how controversial *Probe* was. And now?



“Rock 'n' roll is, after all, a term for sex, and punk music is rock 'n' roll. Over the years, somehow, rock 'n' roll lost its edge as far as how it was being perceived. The pseudo-political/intellectual rants so often found in the magazines at the time had dulled the edge of what was, at one time, free of all that.”

—Ted from *Horizontal Action*.

Everybody wants to get naked for money. It's the new spare-changing. And nobody's really made any compelling arguments against it.

“There are points where the ultra-right wing and the ultra-left wing on this issue would be like, ‘Yeah, totally!’” says Friction USA's Jake. “And I don't want to be super friendly with the ultra-right wing or the ultra-left wing in that regard. All

the discussions Stephanie and I have with people about the site where people say we're doing something wrong, then I'm like, ‘What's wrong with naked bodies?’ Why is it someone else's job to tell a person they're being exploited if they don't feel like they are?”

•••

It's a schism that's pissed off punks since the swastika-armband days: there's the kids who are political and the kids who just don't give a shit. That's fine (hey, we like to get drunk and fuck shit up as much as anyone; no, seriously, we do) but if and when punk takes a stand, it's usually on something “progressive,” something “liberal,” something “lefty,” if not something downright anarchistic and seditious (old men, commence letter writing . . . now!). That's where we got all those crappy hardcore songs about Reagan and nuclear disarmament; that's where we got that politically correct punk bugaboo that split people who actually cared about MRR right down the middle in the '90s; and that's where we got the “whiny,” “pseudo-political” magazine you're holding in your hands right now.

And that's maybe where we got some of punk's fucked ideas about fucking—well, that and people misinterpreting what Ian MacKaye meant when he sang, “don't fuck” way back when. Punks tend to confuse sexism with being anti-sex and feminism with being anti-porn. But a year of punk porn

and the subsequent non-uproar does say as much about punk as it does about porn: either people are ready to deal with sex in more than cave-dweller porn-good/porn-bad terms, or—more likely—they just really wanna see some boobs.

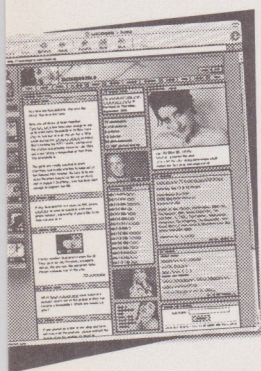
"Punks like sex but hate porn, it seems," says Larry Loudmouth, adult editor for Chicago's *Horizontal Action* zine, which picks up where *Probe* left off with naked girls and guys slipped in between interviews with godhead rock shit like the Spits and the Lost Sounds. Since kicking off in 1997, the zine has clawed its way to a circulation of almost 10,000; that's double what *Probe* ever did and evidence that it's not just the Internet that's getting punks to get naked.

"Rock 'n' roll is, after all, a term for sex, and punk music is rock 'n' roll," says *Horizontal Action*'s publisher Ted. "Over the years, somehow, rock 'n' roll lost its edge as far as how it was being perceived. The pseudo-political/intellectual rants so often found in the magazines at the time [ed. note: that better mean us] had dulled the edge of what was, at one time, free of all that. The politically correct climate that these publications paint over punk music or rock 'n' roll are contradictory to what punk and rock 'n' roll are all about. And that is having a good time, rebellion, and getting laid."

So there's room in that sentence somewhere for everyone from Crass to Crime—if you squint—but the guy's got a point. And it's not just the last aftershocks of that prehistoric PC backlash. Well, it probably is, but it's also part of a dovetailing of punk's prevailing attitudes with third-wave-feminism. Dworkinite philosophies about porn as exploitation still make sense in some contexts, but not all porn necessarily needs to be exploitative anymore.

In fact, says New York filmmaker Becky Goldberg, director of the documentary *Hot and Bothered: Feminist Porn*, porn can be a feminist act in itself. And maybe it's the changing political attitudes toward porn that are filtering into punk. Websites like Burning Angel and Suicide Girls do feminism just fine, Goldberg says, by adopting the techniques of porn positive feminists like Tristan Taormino (author of *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women*) or Shar Rednour and Nan Kinney (the filmmakers behind *Bend Over Boyfriend*) to produce erotica where women aren't just comfortable, they're in charge.

"Feminist porn—I'll give you the short answer—is porn that kind of keeps feminist



"Girls have said to us, 'For the first time in my life, I feel like I'm beautiful.'"

—Suicide Girls' Spooky

ideals in mind," Goldberg explains. "You can watch it and know that the woman is in control of the situation. That doesn't mean she's dominating the guy, but whatever is happening to her is something she *wants* to happen. These girls are on the sites for one reason only: they want to be there. They want to be naked and they want you to see them naked. It's completely empowering for them. Yes, it's pictures of naked people, but in a

lot of ways, it's a political message. They're changing the shape of pornography—what it is and what it can be."

Porn can educate, Goldberg says; it can include a woman's desires as well as a man's; it can contribute to sexual well-adjustment (as opposed to preventing it, as many a Baptist youth counselor will tell you). Done right, she says, porn can advance an agenda of diversity, equality, all that good stuff. And the way these websites do porn, she says, is very punk.

"It's a message I definitely try to push to women, but everyone should know: if you don't see what you want to see, make it yourself," Goldberg says. "And [these sites] are taking something very mainstream that's existed for ages and putting this DIY ethic to it. They're making something no one else is making for them, finding an outlet that's constructive and beneficial. And it's their way of sticking it to the man, which is what punk rock is all about!"

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"Punk porn?" laughs Myriam Gurba. "Real punk porn would be free. It'd be xeroxed—it wouldn't take itself seriously. It would be something that would be so ridiculous you couldn't even get off on it, and it would go out of its way not to feature standard beauties. And if standard beautiful women did get featured, it'd be in the context of being a joke."

Gurba is a model—as well as a writer—for a California site called Punk Erotic that trades on the grittier, scarier side of punk, eschewing the scrubbed-up women of Suicide Girls for Sid-and-Nancy style shower-time-gone-horribly-awry shots. And she thinks a lot of this so-called punk porn is—basically—bullshit. At least as punk. As porn, it's just the same old thing.

The interaction between the models and the members, the feel-good working conditions and the female-friendly content aren't enough, she says. If punk porn is an alternative, it should have something alternative to say about what's sexy, what's erotic, what's worth \$9.95 a month for wank-related activity. And it should start, she says, by offering alternative girls.

"Punk is supposed to be anti-beauty, anti-fashion," she says. "So why is it that a lot of these girls on the sites, if devoid of punk trappings, would totally fit the mainstream image? You could clean these girls up and put them in a regular magazine. And it's not just one or two of them, it's *all* of them. And if you could put them in a regular magazine, that defeats the purpose, because it's exclusionary

in the end. It's discriminatory. If you cleaned these girls up, people would *still* want to jerk off to them. And you know what? They're all fucking white. I'm Mexican, and when I see something that's like a big fucking white blanket, I *notice* if there aren't any spots. But traditionally,

punk is really white, too."

So this is where punk porn gets ugly: if punk (supposedly) doesn't pull its politics from the mainstream, and punk doesn't pull its look and sound from the mainstream, then why the fuck do all these hot punk girls—and some of them are *painfully* fucking hot by even the most bullshit frat-boy standards—look like they just fell out of *Cosmo Girl* and through a back-alley tattoo parlor?

It's a little unsettling. It's evidence that—at least by weight, race and even style—all these rebel rockers who never fit in still want to fuck the prom queen. And all these rebel girls still want to be her: Spooky and Missy and Joanna and Stephanie and Jake will all tell you about what a confidence boost it is to be featured on their sites.

"Girls have said to us, 'For the first time in my life, I feel like I'm beautiful,'" says Spooky. "And when a lot of girls apply to the site, and we ask why they want to be a Suicide Girl, they say, 'For the first time, I've come to where people feel girls like me are the epitome of beauty.'"

But you have to wonder: Suicide Girls puts up one or two girls a week out of sometimes 300 applications. What kind of confidence

people on stage and the people in the audience. And it wouldn't be an issue if porn didn't operate on an antithetical system where the lines are drawn nice and thickly between spectator and participant. Put the two together and something's gotta give. And when the punk fetish finally shows up and it's a lot like the regular mainstream hot-girl fetish, there's something a little disappointing there.

"It's like if you dressed up REO Speedwagon in bondage pants and

"Punk is supposed to be anti-beauty, anti-fashion. So why is it that a lot of these girls on the sites, if devoid of punk trappings, would totally fit the mainstream image? You could clean these girls up and put them in a regular magazine. And it's not just one or two of them, it's *all* of them."

—Punk Erotic's Myrian Gurba

boost do those other 298 girls get?

"The only complaint I'd consider legitimate is that we're furthering certain beauty stereotypes," says Spooky, who doesn't shy away from taking the question head-on. "There aren't women that weigh 300 pounds on the site, and I'm not saying there never will be, but at this point, most of the girls would probably be considered 'beautiful' in most circles. There is an idea of beauty that is just Western media, and it permeates how we choose girls as well. And that's where we may be failing."

But it's not where everybody in alt. porn is failing. *On Our Backs* runs women of all shapes and sizes—so much so they get complaints for being too "out there," says editor Findlay. You can find infucking-sane websites dedicated to every degree of every physical attribute of the human body; you can easily find print zines catering to similarly niche tastes. Even *Horizontal Action* will run, like, a 300 pound naked guy in a fanny pack:

"We try to run the pictures that show the ugliest sides of human nature, be it physical or through action," says *Horizontal Action's* Todd. "Clean over-produced rock 'n' roll music has the same sterile appeal as a touched-up supermodel with no personality."

And it's not even all the punk sites. Jack Sordid's Porn For Punks has transgendered people pissing on each other, for instance ("I think we're the only site out there that doesn't exclusively shoot girls and just a little bit of hardcore," he says, and he's almost right). But it is a lot of them. Certainly, that's the nature of porn—to skew young, white and hot. But is that the nature of punk?

Because it wouldn't be an issue if punk didn't at least *pretend* to be inclusive; to be a place for all those kids who didn't fit in; to be a place where there wasn't supposed to be a difference between the

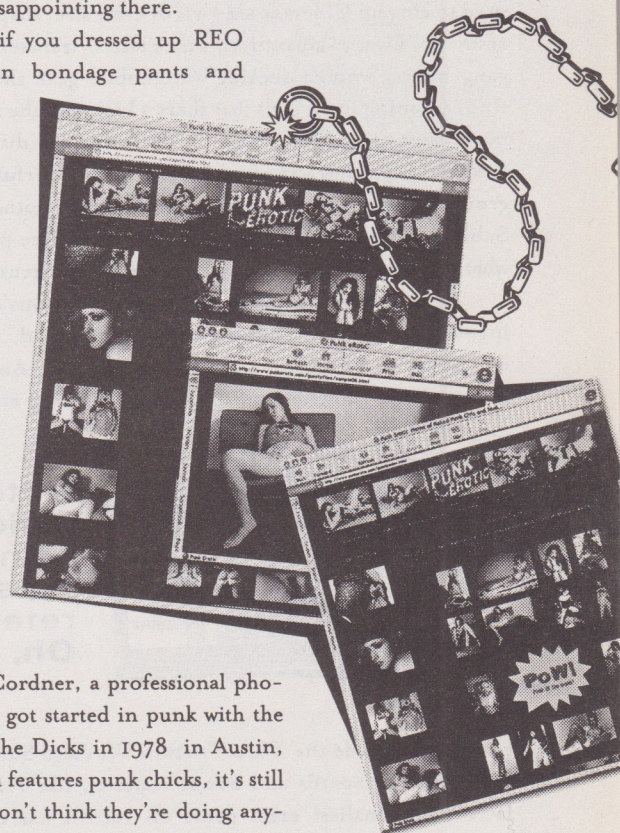
mohawks—they'd still be REO," says Punk

Erotic web-master Geoff Cordner, a professional photographer who got started in punk with the Big Boys and the Dicks in 1978 in Austin, Texas. "If porn features punk chicks, it's still porn. And I don't think they're doing anything to push the envelope in porn—they're doing the same old fucking stuff with a different looking girl. To define a standard of punk beauty is antithetical to punk—or antithetical to punk as I define punk."

...

"You could go on for years about, 'What does a punk girl look like? What does a punk girl mean?'" says documentarian Becky Goldberg. "But people just want to get to the boobs. If you get too tied up in, 'Is it punk? Is it punk enough?' then you've completely missed the point. It's meant to be enjoyed. Making up definitions is just defeating the purpose. There should be a little more unity in things like this."

OK, fine. After all, Suicide Girls is bringing straight-edgers, emo kids and punk rockers together in a way *Punk Planet*



never could. But there's another question that demands to be asked: *why punk porn?*

The webmasters agree: girls. Hot girls. Hot naked girls. Hot naked punker girls. After all, it's fucking porn—it's not that hard to do the math, is it? And they'll all explain that they're simply selling images people can't get anywhere else, so their audience is willing to pay. Elementary capitalism—except it can't be completely true.

The Internet exists to drown the world in porn. And a lot of that porn is free. And in between the blondes-with-big-boobs that used to clog up Cinemax are girls of every size, shape, ethnicity and aesthetic. Even comparatively outré tastes—transsexuals, interracial gang-bangs, women fucking automobile gear shifts—are easy to find; zooming in on girls that share a look with the models on punk porn sites would only take a few seconds (disbelieving cash-strapped perverts may wanna investigate the wonderful world of newsgroups, adult personal ads that include photos, or sites like Sublime Directory, a daily clearinghouse of free porno links). So what is it that punk porno has that regular amateur sites don't?

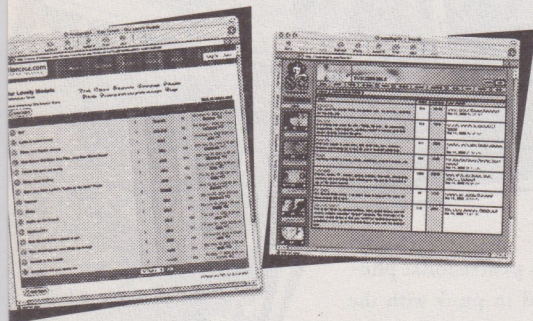
Well, maybe it's the perks: thanks to Joanna's flair for writing—when she's not running the site or naked, she's only four credits shy of a bachelor's in English—Burning Angel has the best columns and interviews of the bunch, offering engagingly punky

Of course, immediately after saying this, he says Friction's stock-in-trade is just pictures of cute naked girls. Like everybody else. But he was right the first time. And when Joanna from Burning Angel talks about how there's a certain amount of voyeurism involved in looking at the girls on her site—girls that people really have seen at shows, probably with their real-life punk rock boyfriends in tow—she's on to something, too.

"Think about it," says Punk Erotic's Myriam. "Every porno site that is selling some sort of niche object always fetishizes the idea that *this is real*. 'Real teens!' 'Real Asian pussy!' 'Real lesbians!' People always want real lesbians, even though none of it is real. Because that fantasy is a big draw—that the girls really get off on it. That they're gonna go home and shoot a gun and drink a beer and see a band."

Of course, the girls on some of the punk porno sites get to represent themselves, to put across as much or as little of their own personalities as they feel is appropriate. Can you trust them when they say they like to drink beer and see bands? Probably—honestly—yeah, sure, they probably do drink beer and see bands. And they probably are a lot like you, the punk rock porn consumer. That's why you pay for it.

See, porn can be a positive thing—Becky Goldberg and Tristan



"After the 30-second image hunt for self-gratification purposes, people want to talk sex; they want to connect with others. It's the boards, the personal e-mails, and the chatrooms that make for retention rates on the adult web across the board. Oh, loneliness." —AVN Online's Rebecca Gray

content alongside the T&A. Friction USA and Suicide Girls both offer message boards and bonus material, like Friction's fun sex facts ("the smallest erect penis on record was one centimeter long"). But that's all free anyway. There's something that punk porn sites are pushing besides pictures, and it's what really makes the kids sign on: like any other porn, they're selling fantasy. And in this case, it's the fantasy of reality.

"It is real girls, girls you'd find at the coffeeshop, and they're so much hotter than someone who is just made to be fucked," says Suicide Girls' Missy. "They're *real* girls with *real* bodies and *real* interests. I guess it is punk rock in the same way you can go up to a band after the show and talk to them."

"There aren't the same boundaries there are [on other sites]," Spooky adds. "You can send an e-mail to a girl and the girl will e-mail you back."

But is it community that's attracting these paying members? Or something else?

"I think they're attractive to me specifically because these are the kind of girls you see at a show, girls you could meet when shopping for clothes—people you could *literally* meet, instead of an unattainable plastic-y fake chick," says Jake from Friction USA. "When the fantasy can become reality in a way, it's somehow more erotic."

Taramino and Annie Sprinkle and the people behind the punk sites are right. But porn is also something that feeds on alienation, something punk as a subculture has up to its pierced-with-a-safety-pin ears.

The idea that everyone poking around on these sites are happy sex-positive hipster couples looking to get a little revved up is as much of a fantasy as everything else they're selling. And the idea that there are a lot of lonely subscribers who don't have any other realistic way of seeing cute naked punk girls is something that *nobody* ever brings up. There's a subtle dynamic at work here that plays to insecurities on both sides of the computer screen—but when Spooky says girls complain about not getting enough fan mail, he still means it as a joke.

"After the 30-second image hunt for self-gratification purposes, people want to talk sex; they want to connect with others," says AVN Online's Rebecca Gray. "It's the boards, the personal e-mails, and the chatrooms that make for retention rates on the adult web across the board. Oh, loneliness."

• • •

Punk porn is still very virginal, as trends tend to go. Those standards of beauty aren't *that* set yet; the burnout hasn't yet flared up. But it's coming, says Cloei from Nakkid Nerds ("I'm not taint-

ed, I've just been around," she explains. "You know what's going to happen: you get to a point when all the cam shows are the same, all the photo sets are the same—it's all the same!"), foreshadowing of what might go down next year. Spooky says that he wouldn't start Suicide Girls now—there's too much competition. His own site has already absorbed an independent upstart. And Punk Erotic's Geoff Cordner has already noticed some subtle changes in himself.

"Anytime you get a little bit too immersed in something like sex, which is what porn is about, you get kind of inured to it," says Geoff Cordner. "You get jaded. A little while ago, I was shooting pictures of someone I just met, and so I was having a conversation with this girl as she's sitting on the toilet with the bathroom door open. And I think to myself, 'Holy fuck. Here in my apartment is some beautiful girl I barely know, and she's sitting on the toilet and we're having this conversation like it's the most normal thing to do.' And I just sort of stepped out of the line of sight—for my own sake—so I wasn't looking at her."

So in another year, where is punk porn going to go? Toward punk and an *actual* new take on getting naked for money? Or down toward porn as another fetish, to file next to the Catholic school girls and the stewardesses? Because in some ways, punk porn demonstrates what everyone knows already: you can't go wrong selling a fashion.

"What makes a punk a punk?" asks Ted from *Horizontal Action*. "Is it their hairdo? Or their T-shirt that advertises their favorite punk band? Or is it the attitude they exude? I don't know. Regardless, whether you're into girls who look . . . whatever . . . there's someone out there who feels the same way. It seems to me that 'punk porn' is just another fetish—like bukkake, S&M, and scat."

And granted, as a fetish—even just as porn—punk porn sites are fucking great. They're co-ed run, female friendly, non-exploitative, interactive, dirt-cheap and more often than not, they feature really hot girls. Better than *Perfect 10* or *Barely Legal* any day of the week, and you can stick that in your banner advertisement, OK? Even Geoff Cordner (he of the "standardizing beauty is not punk" standpoint) believes that any deviation from the Pamela Anderson norm is a little liberation, and that the cumulative effect of all those liberations—the punk thing, the fetish thing, even the all-American girl next door thing—can add up to something huge.

"Hey, DIY's the rule, right on," agrees Rebecca Gray. "That more and more people seem to be tuning into and turning to this soft anarchy is either indicative of me becoming less and less involved in the mainstream to the degree that my perception is just off, or it indicates a wave—a wave of individualism for pleasure and profit. I pray it goes political, too, like a motherfucker, but I'll see you against the wall when it doesn't."

And that's the kick right there: yes, maybe it is pretty stupid to want politics in your porn, but then whoever thought you could make *punk* porn in the first place? Because as punk, most punk porn—the stuff that sells, anyway—is not enough. And we say this for the handful of grad students, the clusters of die-hard alienated librarian/philosophers who read way too many zines, and the pissed-off 14-year-olds smoking behind their high school who just discovered the Dead Kennedys that demand a little substance

behind their style: *more punk, less porn*.

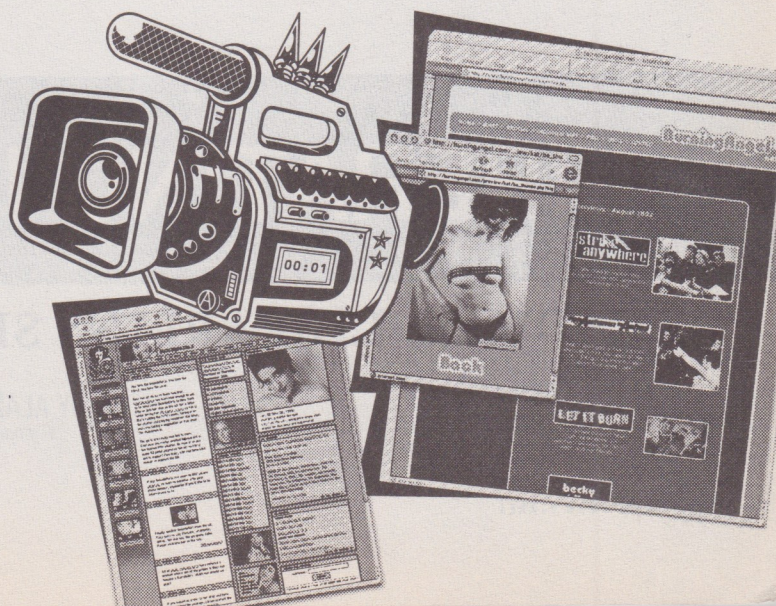
If the mechanisms by which punk porn sites operate aren't too different from those already in place on many alternative porn sites—and if the girls on the punk porn sites aren't too different from the girls already in place on many alternative porn sites—then you have to ask what's different? What's new? What's the point of punk kids doing the site if they're not trying to change what porn is, besides squeezing in a few alternative-looking women? What is there that makes it anything more than a fetish? Or a business? Have people even *thought* about this? What's punk about punk porn, besides that, well, it's marketed to people who want to see naked punk girls?

Well, says Hannah, the first girl to pose for Friction USA, it's in the way her site is a little more creative, the way they treat her, the way there's something on the site besides naked pictures of her. And it's in the way she looks—yeah, she can't say she has small tits, she says, but she's not a blonde porno girl. But, she adds, it doesn't have necessarily have anything to do with her as a person. She doesn't call herself a punk.

"I don't really put that label on myself," she says. "I know a lot of people that are way into punk, but I just don't like labeling it like that. I listen to punk music and, I don't know, how I dress . . . I guess it's pretty much normal."

So what's the difference between her site and all the other naked-girl sites on the net, we ask?

"They do it for themselves," she says. "And they're just doing it their way—instead of someone else's way." ©



At a time when libraries seem increasingly interested in using corporations as models (libraries as free Barnes & Nobles) and imagine their primary users as white, upper-middle-class folks, the idea of the library as a free public university is a radical one. Lucky for us, there are a number of librarians fighting to keep the stacks from total homogeneity.

These radical librarians have the power to redefine our understanding of librarianship as they work to provide information to people who want and need it. Radical librarianship includes the work done by anarchist librarians; librarians who operate in non-library settings (like street protests or infoshops); librarians who are agitating to change how libraries serve their communities (by advocating for multi-lingual library service or for service to the homeless); and librarians who challenge business-as-usual, when that business is outmoded, oppressive, or restrictive. These folks are making libraries and other information-gathering sites truly accessible and relevant to the communities they serve.

DIY librarianship to nomads, protesters, and prisoners

Jessamyn West became a librarian because she loved research, and wasn't excited by the idea of going to law school, her other plan. "I'm not competitive enough, and I agree with Thoreau that you should always beware of enterprises requiring new clothes," she jokes.

West has taken what she learned in library school to the street, volunteering at information desks at the WTO protests in Seattle and the Burning Man Festival. Being a librarian in these contexts feels like second-nature to her.

"I always thought of librarianship as a pretty out-of-the-box sort of deal," she explains. "I tend to fall into doing library-type work when I go places, and Burning Man was no exception. I decided to volunteer at the information desk there and was really excited by the way there were whole new sets of questions to answer and problems to solve. It's one thing to give people advice about books to read and have story times for kids; it's quite another to help people figure out what to do when they're out of water or need to find their friends at a 30,000 person desert party."

West, who is also the force behind librarian.net, a website that keeps track of news and developments in international library culture, gets a charge out of helping people who need it—whether they're in the streets or in the stacks. "It's energizing to me, to be

around people helping them out with stuff all day long, which I think is one of the secret traits good librarians have: you get more and more hyped helping people out, not more and more tired."

Bruce Jensen, a reference librarian for the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System in Los Angeles, shares West's appreciation for helping people, and for going above and beyond the call of duty. Jensen has spent much of his library career—which began after he started teaching ESL classes in his local public library—working to make libraries spaces that are cross-linguistic and cross-cultural in meaningful ways. The idea of a public library that would serve its Spanish-speaking users as well as it would serve its English-speaking users might not *seem* radical, but many libraries fall short of offering multi-lingual services and materials to their patrons.

"This is one of those areas where librarians can and do coast along," Jensen explains. "The exceptional ones who do work to tune in to diverse sectors of their potential user population are doing that on their own dime without much institutional guidance or support. And many of them are not "real" librarians, but rather concerned support staff with a painful consciousness of how much slack there is to pick up. So many of them are doing small things that you never hear about. This is in part because they're dealing with immediate needs that are obvious—and potentially embarrassing."

Jensen learned about the limited amount of material available to Spanish-language readers while teaching ESL in a jail.

"The Spanish-language reading material was limited to comic books and AA publications plus a few stray Bibles," he recalls. "This despite the fact that the town had four different weekly Spanish language newspapers! On my bike ride to work I passed several stores where I could pick those up, so I did. As it turned out, official clearance was needed to bring them inside. I waited weeks and weeks and finally the administrative staff cleared *one* of the newspapers. I knew damn well there was nothing dangerous in the other three, either, so by and by those started drifting in to the huge jail and I didn't hear any complaints from above. When some Vietnamese guys came to join the party, I brought in a local Vietnamese paper too."

It all boils down to what Jensen calls "guerilla DIY librarianship."

"Librarians are gonna have to do it themselves if they see holes that oughta be filled. Library service gaps are genuine social problems rooted in racism, classism, discrimination,

LIBERATING INFORMATION

RADICAL LIBRARIANS SHELVE THE STATUS QUO

BY ALANA KUMBIER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMILY FLAKE

Libraries Are for You

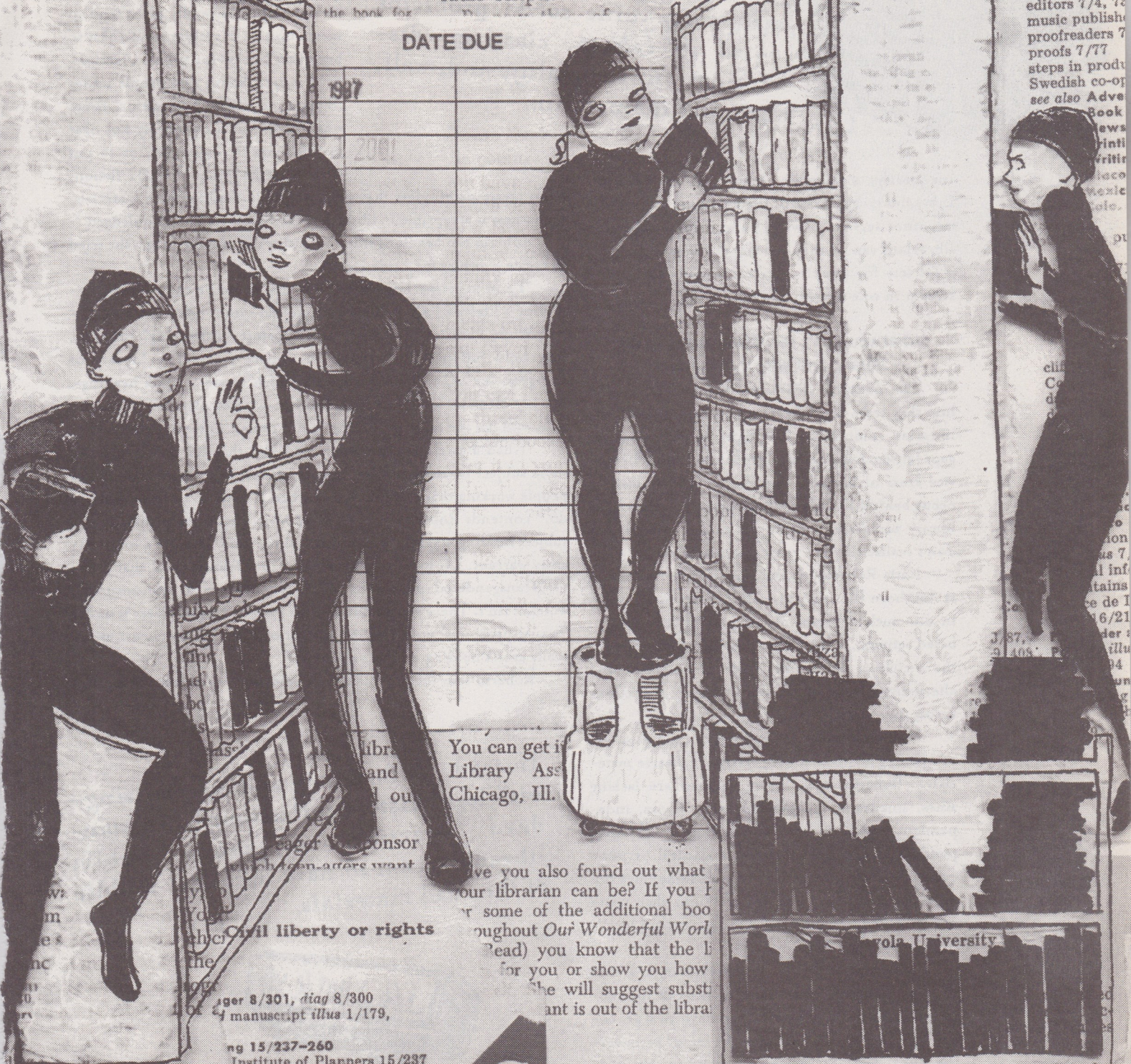
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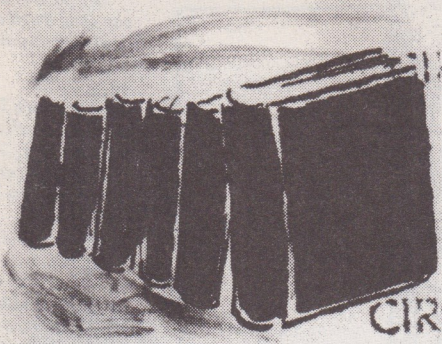
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Librarians are gonna have to do it themselves if they see holes that oughta be filled. Library service gaps are genuine social problems rooted in racism, classism, discrimination, inequality, and, well, historical momentum.

inequality, and, well, historical momentum. Libraries escape some of the pressures that prevail on other service providers and even retailers, so librarians can, if they choose, get away with doing a lot less for people who are outside the mainstream in one way or another."

What you don't see when you're in the library, and why that matters

The question of whom librarians serve, and how they serve their users, are key issues within the librarian community. The types of library service gaps Jensen describes may happen in the public service areas of libraries, but they're just as likely to occur behind the scenes, in departments that many library users aren't aware of, or over which they don't realize they can exert some influence.

Katia Roberto, a cataloger for Morris Library at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, works in one such department. As part of her library-based activism, Roberto has become an advocate for the inclusion of material from independent and alternative presses and labels in library collections across the country.

"I think libraries are still not doing a great job of offering access to a wide variety of diverse materials," Roberto says. "Most libraries are lacking zines, small and independent press books, independent magazines, sound recordings on an independent record label that aren't classical or jazz—except Rounder and Arhoolie, and sometimes not even them—-independent feature films that aren't widely distributed, and many things that are locally or regionally produced."

Roberto, like Jensen, sees the library as a kind of socio-political microcosm. In the call for submissions for the book she and Jessamyn West are co-editing, *Revolting Librarians Redux* (the sequel to an earlier book, *Revolting Librarians*, authored in the 1970s by Celeste West and Elizabeth Katz), Roberto and West list a number of issues that are as problematic as they were three decades ago, among them heteronormativity in libraries.

"It's okay to be gay or lesbian in libraryland, but not queer and not pan/bisexual," explains Roberto. "This means that any attempts to make your library a queer-friendly place tend to meet with a lot of resistance. It's okay to buy queer books—for adults, of course, since everyone knows that people under 18 have no sexual orientation issues whatsoever—but it's probably not okay to put them in an exhibit, or to put stickers on the spines of GLBT fiction,

or to create pathfinders that assist people in finding these materials. Queerness is acceptable in libraryland if it remains unacknowledged."

Roberto ran headlong into this reality this summer when she tried to create a display for Pride month.

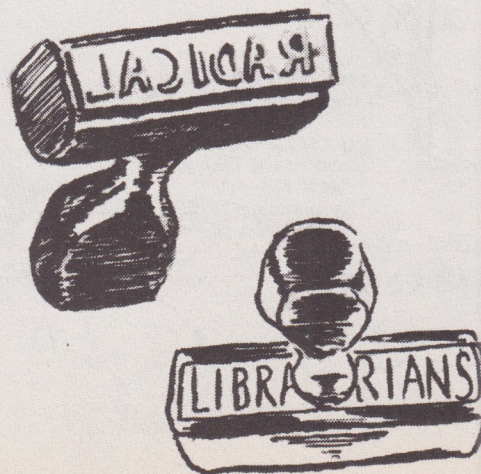
"I had to get permission because that could be considered 'promoting a lifestyle,' which libraries never do—yeah, right," she quips.

While libraries may make claims against "promoting" lifestyles, they hold full power over how to classify them. The Library of Congress (or LC in librarian-speak) which creates subject headings, the key element in library classification systems plays an important role, and has the most explaining to do, radical librarians contend.

"I had a cataloging professor who said that LC had created all these subject headings for gay people because there were a lot of gay people working there. If this is true, then LC still has a lot of work to do," contends Roberto. "'Bears (Gay Men)' has been proposed as a subject heading several times and it still isn't one, despite a lot of literary warrant. LC has a subject heading for 'Transsexuals' that refers to 'Transgendered people' as if it's synonymous to transsexuality, which it isn't. There's a call number for bisexuality that places it under 'Sexual problems' and 'Psychosexual disorders.' Those queers at LC really aren't holding up their end of it."

Roberto sees these problems as ones with which library patrons

Instead of focusing and specializing—with local history collections being standard practice, say—more public libraries seem to have identical middle of the road materials.



might have the greatest power to intervene, since user input is something library administrators will often seriously consider. She suggests that readers request the library stock more GLBT (or other under-represented materials) materials. Additionally, it is important to check out the materials the library has already, since this helps demonstrate a need for materials, Roberto explains. She also suggests joining your public library's library friends group and asking questions at meetings, or by going directly to the library's board of directors or trustees.

Finally, Roberto notes that praise works as well—if not better than—criticism. "If your library creates exhibits or pathfinders that you like, tell them. Library workers always want more positive feedback."



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Street librarianship

The work Roberto is doing to advocate for the inclusion of alternative materials in library collections is inspired, in part, by the work of librarians like Chris Dodge (on Roberto's website, she notes that the short answers to the question "So, Katia, why did you become a cataloger" would be either "1. I don't know" or "2. It's all Chris Dodge's fault").

Chris Dodge serves both the editorial staff and thousands of readers as the resident librarian at *Utne Reader* magazine. Dodge's work is a fine example of DIY, radical librarianship, and he defies any stereotypical notion of a passive, disengaged library worker. Like several other radical librarians, Dodge didn't plan on becoming a librarian. "Call me the Accidental Librarian," he jokes.

Dodge entered college at just 16, dropped out a year later, and moved to Minneapolis. After a year and a half of dishwashing, doing door-to-door work, and temping, he took the civil service test that allowed him to gain an entry-level position at the Hennepin County Library. Under the influence of his mentors, Sandy Berman and Jan DeSirey (who both

worked in the cataloging department with Dodge), he became an associate librarian, completed some library coursework, edited an alternative library newsletter (the *Minnesota Social Responsibilities Round Table Newsletter*), and became an activist librarian and alternative press advocate. Dodge has worked on books, articles and programs, marched in peace demonstrations under library banners, tabled at events, and engaged in other forms of social justice activism.

His career has been defined by his attention to the material he's come to champion: the stuff that's contraband, that libraries won't integrate into their collections. The books that are discarded because they seem unappealing to a desired patron-base of businessmen and book-clubbers.

"When I was a child, librarians evidently discriminated against low-brow popular materials," Dodge remembers. "My hometown library excluded Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries, just for one category. Sure, it had a recorded music collection, but that was entirely classical. And comic books? You've got to be kidding. The closest I could find were a few musty collections of cartoons from *The New Yorker*."

While Dodge admits that we've "come a long way since then," he still feels there's much work to be done.

"Instead of focusing and specializing—with local history collections being standard practice, say—more public libraries seem to have identical middle of the road materials." On his "Street Librarian" website and in his regular *Utne Reader* column of the same name, Dodge works to connect readers and activists

to an astounding variety of independent publications, alternative and anarchist collections and resources that are often under mainstream library-radar. "Street librarian" is how Dodge defines himself, and it's part of his own understanding of librarianship: "I'd been reading and writing about street newspapers—produced by and for homeless people—and about infoshops, the storefront alternative spaces that act partly as zine libraries. I thought that 'street librarian' suggested seat-of-the-pants librarianship, the idea that a library isn't so much a building as a concept and that more librarians ought to get out from behind their reference desks and out practicing in the real world the things they are good at doing: connecting books, magazines, films, music, ideas, and knowledge with the people who want (and even need) them. Librarianship of passion. Librarianship of love."

Sandy Berman, Librarian to the People

Dodge's intellectual curiosity and drive to share resources with readers is a trait that would be (and most likely is) admired by his mentor, Sandy Berman, the radical librarian whose work has re-defined the profession for many librarians.

Sandy Berman once famously stated "I can't have information I know would be of interest to someone and not share it." It's a statement that holds true for the way he conducted his professional career as Head Cataloger for Hennepin County Library, as well as for his personal impetus to connect people with the information they need (whether they know they need it or not).

A small example of Berman-in-action: Before our interview, he'd assembled a set of notes in anticipation of our conversation. The day after, he left messages on the answering machine suggesting addenda to our talk. Within a week of the interview, he'd compiled and mailed me a set of copies of his recent columns and essays, as well as the tables of contents for a few of the anthologies of alternative library literature he co-edits, articles that have been written about him, and a flyer and Bollywood soundtrack CD from his local Indian grocer (we'd talked briefly about the need for such materials in library collections, and I'd mentioned I'd been listening to the Rough Guide Bollywood CD).

Born in Chicago and raised in Los Angeles, Berman entered library school at Catholic University in Washington DC, as part of a work-study program at the library where he was working after failing the oral part of the Foreign Service exam. After graduating, he found himself working as an assistant librarian at university libraries in Zambia and Uganda. It was there where he learned the power that a librarian wields.

Berman discovered that the Library of Congress subject headings the libraries used were problematic. Berman's African colleagues informed him that the subject heading "kafirs," used to describe black South Africans, was at best derogatory and at worst a racial slur. This moment of recognition sparked Berman's decades-long campaign to investigate, critique, and improve the way library materials are cataloged, by petitioning the LC to add to or alter existing subject headings and by incorporating original subject headings in the Hennepin County Library's catalog.

Berman's campaign was formalized in his 1971 book *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Headings Concerning People*. Berman saturated his text with examples of LC subject headings (such as "Yellow Peril" or "Jewish Question") that he argued were Eurocentric, sexist, Christian-oriented, and generally outmoded and oppressive. Berman and his staff at the Hennepin County Library published regular bulletins detailing the subject headings they had implemented at the library, and petitioned the LC to follow their example.

When you look at a list of headings used by LC and compare them to alternate suggestions made by Berman and his staff, the reasons for his campaign are apparent. Berman asked how users looking for information about birth defects might feel when they're directed to a subject heading that reads "Abnormalities, Human," or the potential for misleading patrons who search catalogs for information on drag queens or drag kings, and are directed instead to books about "Transvestites."

Berman's ongoing campaigns for change in both cataloging practices and larger library policies (such as libraries' service to homeless people, their hit-and-miss acquisition of alternative library materials, and their corporate ethos) placed him in the center of controversy throughout his career. In 1999, his career abruptly ended when a disagreement with supervisors about a memo Berman had written in his capacity of Head Cataloger met with their disapproval. Some members of the library community were happy to see him go—a

profile in the Minneapolis *City Paper* quotes one unidentified LC cataloger who describes the librarian as "an insufferable, self-righteous, unrealistic, naïve, head-in-the-clouds idealist who knows nothing about the real world of grind-it-out bibliographic data."

But retirement doesn't seem to have slowed Berman down in the least. His newfound location outside the library hasn't changed his dedication to insisting that libraries across the US live up to their mission as centers for lifelong learning.

"It seems wonderfully curious to me that the 'D-word' [democracy] is almost held in contempt by a whole lot of librarians," Berman says, "because in the public mind—and properly so—the library is associated with being the bulwark of democracy and the university of the people. But the sharp truth is that the governance of most libraries is woefully un-democratic."

Berman sees current events as a perfect opportunity to bring democracy back to the library—and to the people. "One way for libraries to promote democracy would be to identify and then promote discussion about serious public issues like corporate globalization, poverty, non-violent alternatives to war—there's a lot libraries could do but don't often, if ever, do. They do these things for gardening and tax preparation, but it's not often that there were serious programs after September 11, for example, that really got into causes of what happened or American foreign policy or resource guides that were presenting counter-information to the official pronouncements."

...

The work of Berman, as well as fellow radical librarians like, Chris Dodge, Katia Roberto, Jessamyn West, and Bruce Jensen proves a point: that libraries—often imagined as neutral at best and irrelevant and apathetic at worst—are political spaces. As American political spaces, particularly, they have a mission to realize the democratic ideals that define (or *should* define) US institutions—and to enact that realization in practical, meaningful ways, not just in professional literature and Banned Book Weeks.

But it's not just up to the handful of librarians willing to fight—the politics of libraries ensure that readers can be agents for change as well. By using the library services we support, offering suggestions for services and materials that are absent (like zines, CDs and relevant programs), and participating in the creation of libraries that reflect the needs of our communities, we can help to re-stock the shelves with new ideas. ©



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We're lost. My friend and I are attempting to find a show, but all we know is it's somewhere on Chicago's DePaul University campus. We're wandering around, trying to find a group that looks right. Outside one building, 20-somethings with buttoned-down shirts speak calmly to one another. Not them. On a stretch of hedge-trimmed lawn, a group of business-casual women chat. Again, not them. Finally, my companion, who's now orienteering via cell phone, points across the parking lot. Someone's jumping up and down, waving frantically. We've found the punks.

There's about 40 people here, a decent-sized crowd given the tiny venue. Mani Mostofi, vocalist for headliners the Kill Pill, mingles among the clusters of people, talking earnestly with friends and strangers alike. He gives a big hug to a woman in hijab, then shakes hands with her companion, a tall black man with dreadlocks pulled back in a ponytail. Making his way to where the opening band is setting up, he hugs my friend, a white woman, and another scenester, the Mexican-American bassist for a local hardcore band.

Mostofi isn't focusing on the diversity in the room; he's preoccupied with getting psyched up to perform. But he wouldn't want any other audience. And he's not alone. The anti-racist punk scene is growing, and it's getting organized.

Support from the Scene

Turn it Down is part of the organizing force. Justin Massa, the 23-year-old coordinator of Turn it Down, has been involved in punk since his teenage years in New Orleans. When he moved to Chicago in 1997, he found work as an intern at the Center for a

New Community, a privately funded faith-based organization promoting democracy and justice at the community level. He was assigned to begin research on the Center's new project dealing with the resurgence of music as a recruiting tool for white power groups. That project became known as Turn it Down.

Massa, who's rockabilly-slick hair and long sideburns are improbably paired with dress slacks and a button-down shirt (he's just come from a meeting where he was representing Turn it Down) had long been upset that an organized racist presence was hurting the punk scene. "It was a subculture that meant a lot to me," Massa says, so he felt the need for action. That action was to take a leadership role in the fledgling Turn it Down.

The Chicago music scene has supported Turn it Down since the organization's early days. Legendary venues like the Fireside Bowl and the Metro are listed among Turn it Down's endorsers, as well as record distributors like Red Line and bands like the Blue Meanies, the Killing Tree, and Mostofi's former band Racetractor.

A year and a half ago, Mostofi carried Turn it Down's pamphlet *Soundtrack to the White Revolution* on the merch tables he set up at local shows. It came in handy when, one night at the Fireside, a young man wearing a patch for early white-power band Skrewdriver showed up. The show's promoter asked him to leave, which he did, but Mostofi decided to follow and talk to him. "He should have been approached," Mostofi explains. "He needed to know why he was being kicked out."

Mostofi asked the boy if he was white-power, and he said he was. When Mostofi asked him why, the young man, who was not

"WE HEAR THE SLOGAN, 'WHITE PEOPLE AWAKE. SAVE OUR GREAT RACE,' TWICE PER CHORUS, EIGHT TIMES TOTAL THROUGH AN ENTIRE SONG, AND IF THEY PLAY THAT TAPE FIVE TIMES A WEEK AND JUST LISTEN TO THAT ONE SONG, THEY'RE LISTENING TO 'WHITE PEOPLE AWAKE. SAVE OUR GREAT RACE,' 40 TIMES IN THAT ONE WEEK, WHICH MEANS 160 TIMES A MONTH. YOU DO THE MATH BEYOND THAT."

TURNING DOWN WHITE POWER'S NOISE

even out of high school, couldn't give him a clear answer. Mostofi gave him a copy of *Soundtrack* and told him to think more about his beliefs.

The Birth of White Power Music

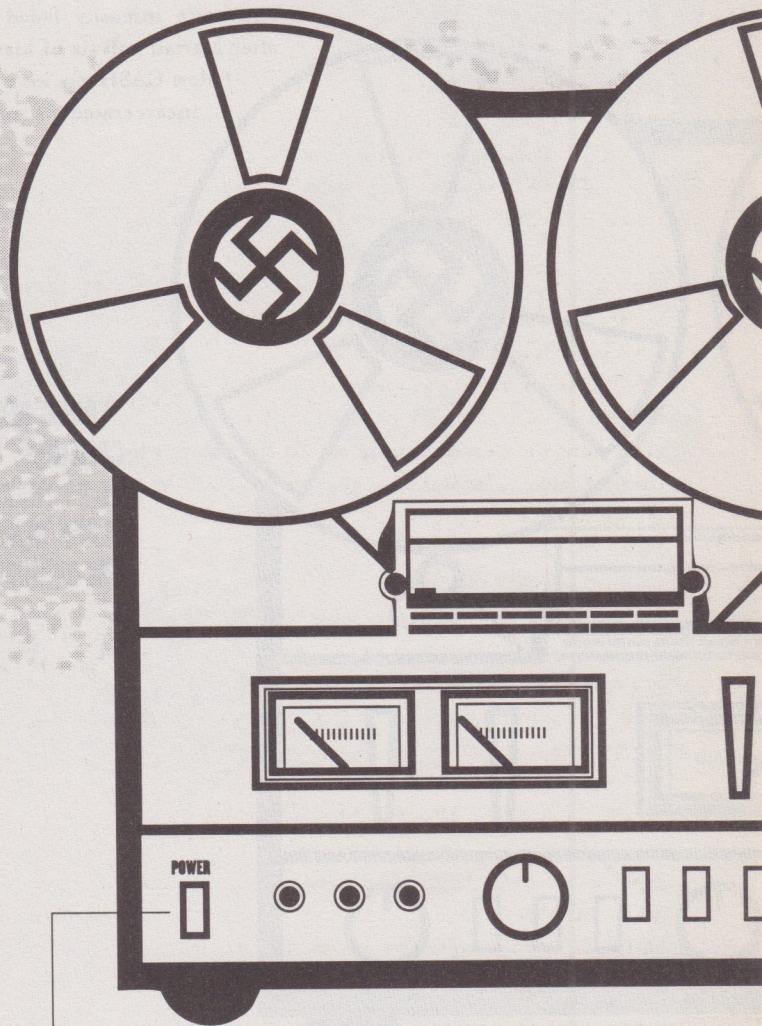
White power and rock music didn't always get along. The old school of white power in America, groups such as the KKK and the American Nazi Party, distrusted rock for being too "black," and generally rallied their troops to more traditional sounds. But then came the skinheads, and everything changed.

According to *Soundtrack*, skinheads started in England in the 1960s, originally a non-racist working-class movement made up of blacks, Asians, and whites. However, the British National Front, a neo-Nazi group, saw this new scene as a potential way to recruit disaffected youth, and a racist offshoot of the original skinheads formed.

In the 1970s, Britain's newborn punk scene revitalized the fading skinhead movement. As before, white power groups moved into punk and caused a divide in the scene. The split was felt in America as well, which had imported the British punk sound and with it a renewed platform for white power beliefs.

The first place where white power skinheads exerted their influence was Chicago, where in 1984 Clark Martell formed the Chicago Aryan Skinheads (also called Romantic Violence and CASH). This group helped to spread the word about European white power bands, and members of CASH quickly formed their own band, Final Solution.

In response, some anti-racist punks formed Skinheads of



OFF SWITCH

BY CLAIRE PODULKA

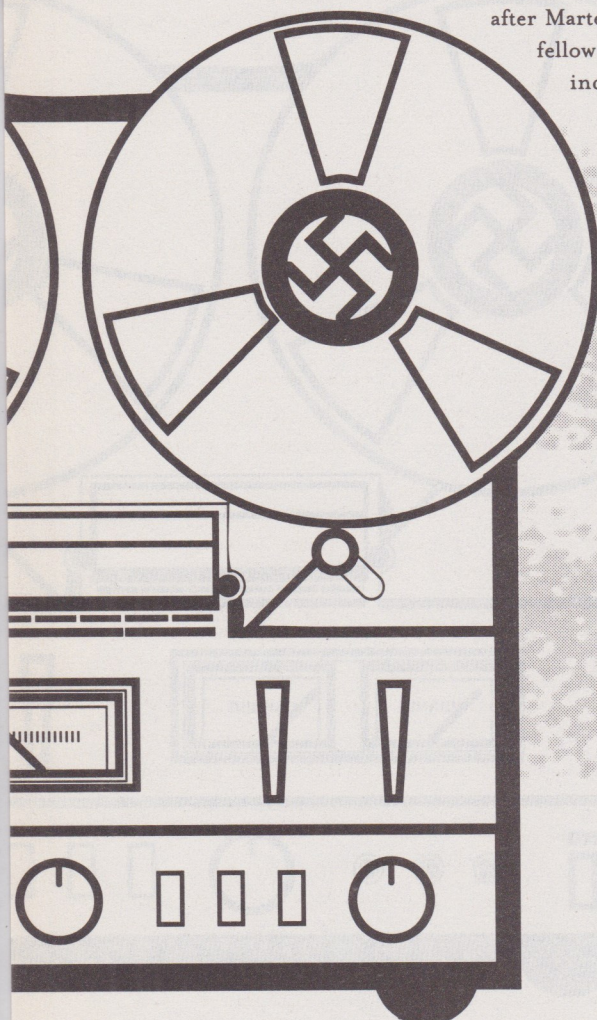
Chicago (SHOC). "Chicago has a good history of the punk scene rising up to fight," Massa says. "CASH and SHOC battled it out every weekend on the streets."

These battles made headlines in the local papers. In the March 24, 1989 *Chicago Reader*, Bill Wyman detailed the vicious fights between rival skinhead gangs: "One night a bunch of south-suburban Nazis tried to run [an anti-racist skinhead] down with a car; he broke their windshield with a chain and ended up in jail; later that night, he says, after he was released, they caught him again and beat him up with an ax handle in the walkway beneath his apartment. Then they broke into his room and tossed his stereo out the window for good measure."

The war's intensity faded after Martell and six of his fellow CASH-ers were incarcerated in

Illinois and Indiana. He injured nine people, killed two, then shot himself. A month later, Buford Furrow, also motivated by white power beliefs, injured five people when he opened fire at a Jewish daycare center in Los Angeles, and later shot and killed a Filipino-American postal worker. At the same time, new money and new levels of sophistication were entering the white power music business.

Before 1999, white power bands and white power political organizations had acted independently of one another. But William Pierce, chairman of the National Alliance, an American neo-Nazi group, decided that music provided an as-yet-untapped opportunity to spread his ideas. So in the summer of 1999 he purchased Resistance Records, a once-influential American white power record label that had fallen on hard times since the imprisonment of its founder, George Burdi, for assault in 1997 [Burdi was interviewed in *Punk Planet* #48]. Funding from the National



"YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARD SEGREGATION ARE HORRIFIC," MASSA CONFIDES. HE CITES A 1999 STUDY BY HAMILTON COLLEGE OF PEOPLE AGED 18 TO 29 THAT FOUND 52 PERCENT OF WHITE RESPONDENTS AND 40 PERCENT OF BLACK RESPONDENTS AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT, "IT'S OK IF THE RACES ARE BASICALLY SEPARATE."

1988 for breaking into a woman's apartment, brutally assaulting her and painting a swastika on her wall with her own blood. For many years, the white power scene went underground. Then a man named Benjamin Smith forced it back to the surface.

The Summer of '99

On July 4, 1999, Benjamin Smith, a member of the white power World Church of the Creator, went on a shooting spree in

Alliance brought Resistance back to the big-time.

The tight connection between the National Alliance and Resistance is even more apparent today. When Pierce bought Resistance, he put Erich Gliebe in charge of managing the label. As a member of the National Alliance, Gliebe said he was able to "awaken and educate a good number of people," he explains. In order to further this goal, he was proud to help the struggling label get back on its feet.

Gliebe, the only white power representative who agreed to speak on the record for this article, became the head of the National Alliance when Pierce died of cancer in July. Massa notes the appointment of a man trained at a record label to a leadership position in a political organization as a sign of the extent to which the white power movement relies on the music scene for support and recruitment.

"Our numbers are greatly increasing," Gliebe said, via e-

mail before taking the reins of the National Alliance. "More and more white people, especially our youth, will be turning to us for answers."

The focus on youth involvement in white power is echoed by Gliebe's late boss. "There is a growing hunger among our young men and women everywhere to get in touch with their roots," Pierce wrote in *Resistance* magazine. "There's no better tool for that than racially conscious music."

"A Youth Issue"

Because white power organizations stress youth recruitment, Turn it Down does as well. Although Turn it Down also educates parents, adults and members of the record industry, the most important aspect of the group's action, Massa says, is its work with youth.

Working in schools and with community organizations, Turn it Down tries both to make young people more aware of how white power groups operate and also to get them to participate in anti-racist actions themselves. It's important to get young people, not just adults, involved directly, Massa explains. "The parents' role is not to take the lead in responding to white power music, but to support youth. This is a youth issue."

After several years of speaking to high school and college students, Massa is still shocked by their thoughts on race relations. "Young people's attitudes toward segregation are horrific," he confides. He cites a 1999 study by Hamilton College of people aged 18 to 29 that found 52 percent of white respondents and 40 percent of black respondents agreed with the statement, "It's OK if the races are basically separate."

White power images like swastikas and iron crosses are commonplace in youth environments like schools and clubs. Massa has found that between 70 and 90 percent of the students he's talked to have seen white power symbols somewhere outside of a textbook.

Many of the students Turn it Down has spoken to have decided to become active in the organization. Cory Stewart first learned about Turn it Down when he was a junior at Glenbrook North High School in Northbrook, a northern suburb of Chicago. After Massa did a presentation at the school, Stewart approached him about a chance to volunteer. Although he never saw any signs of white power in his school—he calls his hometown a "biodome"—Stewart wanted to get involved with Turn it Down to fulfill a school community service requirement. He quickly learned that his work was more important than just school credit.

Since joining Turn it Down, Stewart has run information tables at shows, led peer workshops and assisted Massa with leadership training sessions. Stewart, who was only marginally interested in the punk scene when he started with Turn it Down, now makes it a major focus of his life. He enthusiastically listed off names of bands he's met and interviewed for Turn it Down's Internet radio station. He sees young people's involvement as key. "Kids are more likely to respond to something in their own world," he explains.

Fighting for the Kids

More and more, white power organizations are using music to recruit youth and revitalize an aging movement. The new generation of white power supporters is attracted to the fashion and the

sound of racist skinhead punk and national socialist black metal because they don't seem so far from mainstream trends.

And music is a highly effective tool. Resistance's founder Burdi (who since being freed from jail has become a strident anti-racist) does the math: "We hear the slogan, 'White people awake. Save our great race,' twice per chorus, eight times total through an entire song, and if they play that tape five times a week and just listen to that one song, they're listening to 'White people awake. Save our great race,' 40 times in that one week, which means 160 times a month. You do the math beyond that."

In order to listen, though, the kids have to get their hands on the music. Most mainstream record labels refuse to carry bands that promote white power ideas. Similarly, many record stores won't sell this brand of controversial music. One exception is Record Breakers, located in Hoffman Estates, a northwest suburb of Chicago. An independent record store, it carries several white power titles. The store has sold these CDs for seven years; about two years ago, anti-racist groups started protesting. But the ownership refused to take the white power CDs off the shelves.

"We didn't feel like telling our customers they couldn't listen to it," explains Rob Glick, owner of Record Breakers. He said that he and his business are not racist, but to him it is an issue of free speech. "We don't want to sponsor anything."

"Record Breakers is a sad story," Massa admits. When asked about the store's First Amendment defense, he responds, "Censorship should never happen, but you should use *your* free speech to speak out against white power music." In targeting the store, Massa doesn't want to put Record Breakers out of business, but does want to get the ownership to reconsider its decision.

Even if most stores don't carry white power music, it's readily available on the Internet. Not only do the major American bands and distributors have their own Web sites, but merchandise from Europe is also easy to find. By bridging the Atlantic, the Internet has made the more powerful and well-established European white power scene available to the younger American audience. With more money and time being invested in bringing young people to white power music, Turn it Down must always increase its efforts, Massa says, to keep up.

• • •

The show's over. During his impassioned onstage antics, Mostofi tangled himself in his mike cord and pulled the PA off its stand. It's broken. Now it's time to hustle out of here before anyone shows up to assign blame for the smashed equipment.

We're hanging around outside, watching the bands load out. The Indian-American bassist from an opening band is hefting something fairly expensive-looking—lots of dials and knobs—down the stairs. He's struggling. The white vocalist from another band runs over and takes one end of it, and they shuffle it out to the van together. Race is probably the last thing on their minds. Somewhere along the way, they decided to take the subculture and the sounds—the same sounds that the Midtown Boot Boys use to proclaim, "The world belongs to white man!"—and use it to bring people together. Somewhere along the way, these men understood that refusing to work together wasn't an option. ©

For an unusually overcast and windy Saturday afternoon, the corner of 18th and Castro is teeming with life. One week until San Francisco's annual gay pride parade, the celebration has been in swing since the beginning of the month. Street traffic is thicker than normal. At the Castro Theatre, a line stretches down the block for this afternoon's screening of Laura Muscardin's *Days (Giorni)* at the International San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Twin Peaks is packed with bar patrons, its windows filled with rainbow colored balloons. And across the street, a small group of activists have converged in Harvey Milk Plaza. Named after assassinated populist Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected city official in the United States, the plaza is a corridor into the Castro, the neighborhood central to San Francisco's reputation as a Queer Mecca. Connected to a Muni station used daily by thousands of commuters, Harvey Milk Plaza is probably the best place in the Castro to capture an audience. So it makes sense that LAGAI, a queer activist group, chose this site for their pre-pride "Sellebrity Auction."

Punning on the term celebrity while confronting big business' investment in the queer community, LAGAI's annual pre-pride event is attracting attention. Banners strung above the escalator exit read "You're not OUT 'til you've SOLD Out" and "Take Stock in Your Community." Fliers invite people to attend the "Community Direct Auction," stating "Bring your politics and your ethics—who knows what you could GET for them!" A "host" wanders around with a microphone, asking passersby how much they would sell their identity to a company like Coca-Cola or Bud Light. Each time someone is approached with the question, LAGAI organizers chant for them to "SELL OUT! SELL OUT!" MUNI commuters are caught off guard by the commotion. Some laugh at the signs, others seem bothered by the message, but most continue walking. According to one organizer, the turn out has been fair—about 20 to 25 people. A mixture of street theatre and satire, camp and criticism, the core of this convergence is hardly a fringe issue. Corporate sponsorship, many fear, is leading to the crass commer-

cialization of the Gay and Lesbian Pride movement. Weary of aggressive marketing tactics by major corporations and the increasingly limited conformity of queer identity, activists are virulently questioning pride events that seem more like a corporate dance party than a day of solidarity.

Since 1970, queer folk have marched in late June to commemorate three-nights of riots in 1969 when hundreds of New York gays, lesbians, and drag queens fought police and demanded an end to harassment. The Stonewall riots—named after the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street where the fighting began—ignited what has become the queer liberation movement. Initially celebrated only in New York and Los Angeles, cities across the world have since joined the annual declaration of queer identity.

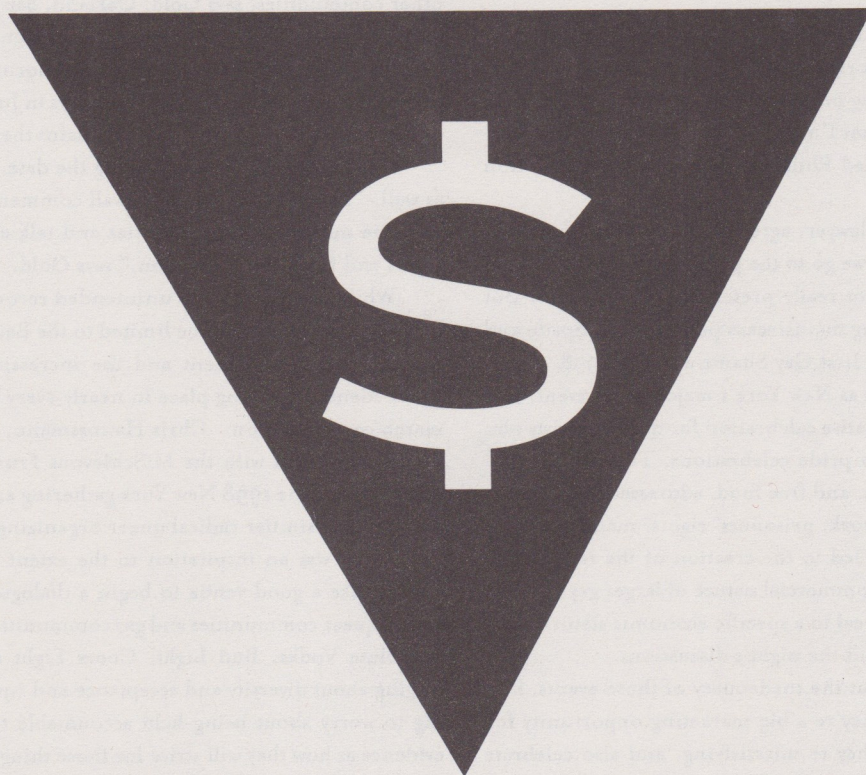
Until 1984, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee organized New York's pride event. Now, Heritage of Pride, Inc., a non-profit volunteer group, oversees New York's annual pride march. Like many other cities, New York's event, which draws over 700,000 people, has evolved from a protest march into a parade and colorful celebration of contemporary queer culture. With that change, the production cost has grown, leading to the involvement of corporate advertising and underwriting. For pride organizers, this is only natural.

"It's an evolving event. Is it changing? Yes, it is," says David Schnider, media director for Heritage of Pride. "It's probably changing to reflect how our community is doing."

However, the event's evolution is exactly what has caused many to step away from pride events like New York's. Pride, activists say, is not about corporate sponsorship, prominent advertising space, or excessive spending. The production cost for Heritage of Pride's annual march, rally, and celebration is now more than half a million dollars.

This year, Coca-Cola, Anheuser-Busch, Schick, Miller Brewing Company, United Airlines, Bank of America, and Smirnoff were all major sponsors of pride celebrations in San

Swallow Your Pride



Frustrated by the corporate takeover of gay pride events, queer radicals are bringing the riot back to the party.

By George B. Sanchez

Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, and Toronto. Anheuser-Busch contributed \$81,000 to the San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Celebration committee and was the largest contributor to New York Heritage of Pride.

Along with LAGAI, many queer activists have questioned the involvement of corporations and its residual effects on the gay and lesbian pride movement. As Tommi Avicoli Mecca, the former editor of the *Philadelphia Gay News*, explains, "this mass appeal and corporate sponsorship of our pride has been accompanied by a de-emphasis on politics. As more and more of corporate America gravitated toward pride, the 'gay pride march' changed to a 'parade' (or 'celebration')."

"I look at it and think, 'Is this what I spend the last 31, 32 years of my life struggling for—the right of corporations like Coors beer, that funds anti-gay right wing organizations . . . the right for them to be included on my day, that I'm supposed to be feeling proud?'" asks Mecca, who co-organized Philadelphia's first Gay Liberation March in 1972.

Dean Spade, a poverty lawyer, agrees with Mecca's dissatisfaction. "We just felt like when we go to the pride events, we didn't see our politics and our activism really presented," he explains. But instead of simply questioning mainstream pride events, Spade and other activists organized the first Gay Shame event in 1998.

Held the same weekend as New York's major pride event, Gay Shame was billed as an alternative celebration for queer activists who felt alienated by mainstream pride celebrations. The night's program included poetry, music, and free food, addressed low-income people's rights, anti-racist work, prisoners' rights, mainstream gay assimilationist agendas, and led to the creation of the zine *Swallow Your Pride*. The increasingly commercial nature of larger gay and lesbian pride events and its appeal to a specific economic status was an underlying theme through out the night's discussions.

"We wanted to talk about the inadequacy of those events, how expensive things are, how they're a big marketing opportunity for corporations, all the ways they're unsatisfying, and also celebrate the work that we do because there is a vibrant community of queer people doing progressive and radical activism" says Spade.

Gay Shame's sentiment is a universal one. The same year as the East Coast's first organized alternative to pride, LAGAI organized a campaign to crash San Francisco's pride parade. Chanting, "It's a movement, not a market," hundreds of queer activists disrupted the parade.

"You can either abandon the queer movement and says it's all bullshit and it's all about money or you can attempt to say no. I'll be the first to say the Stonewall Rebellion saved my life and I think it saved the life of many, many other queers," insists Deeg Gold, a LAGAI organizer. "I'm not particularly ready to give it up. I mean, Coca-Cola didn't save my life."

But Coca-Cola and other corporate sponsors have become key to financing pride celebrations like San Francisco's multi-million dollar extravaganza, says Teddy Witherington, the executive direc-

tor of the San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Celebration Committee.

"I think a lot of people forget that it's a free event. A lot of people also forget that five years ago, it was also a bankrupt event," explains Witherington in his London East End accent. "The corporate support that we do have allowed us to put on a world-class event and it allows us to put on a free event. It also allows us to give money back to our community. Last year, we gave back \$114,388 to over 30 communities."

Yet activists say the excess that Witherington claims is necessary is questionable. While the Pride Celebration Committee gave back a record \$129,755 to San Francisco's queer community despite the economy's tailspin, San Francisco's "world class event" is damaging other communities, says Gold. Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Cruz, currently celebrate pride on alternate weekends to not conflict with San Francisco's pride events. The neighboring cities no longer celebrate pride on the traditional three days in June because of the draw of San Francisco's "gaudy" event, explains the LAGAI organizer.

Gold believes that by changing the date, the point gets altered as well. "The point of the Stonewall commemoration is for people to come out in *their* communities and talk about fighting for our rights and for queer liberation," says Gold.

While San Francisco's unintended rerouting of other gay and lesbian pride events may be limited to the Bay Area, the contention of corporate involvement and the increasing limited notion of queer identity is taking place in nearly every city that holds a pride march or celebration. Chris Hannssmann, who organized a gay-shame type event with the MiSchievous FruiT BriGade in Seattle this year, says the 1998 New York gathering and *Swallow Your Pride* was a catalyst for similar radical queer organizing.

"That was an inspiration to the extent that the pride parade seemed like a good venue to begin a dialogue about consumerism within queer communities and gay communities," says Hannssmann. "Absolute Vodka, Bud Light, Coors Light are prancing around, singing about diversity and acceptance and equal rights without having to worry about being held accountable to provide meaningful evidence as how they will strive for those things."

Coining themselves a "anti-corporate, pro-DIY, anti-racist, pro-freak, anti-gender rules, pro-youth, anti-assimilation, pro-FUN assembly of queers," the MiSchievous FruiT BriGade planned a day long skill share the day before Seattle Pride '02, which included screen printing, bicycle repair, transgender ally activism, and femme coalition building. At the parade, which attracted nearly 100,000 people, Hannssmann and others performed a skit about businessmen tapping into the gay and lesbian market. In the skit, commercial oriented gays and lesbians, portrayed as robots muttering "Out of the closet and into the Gap" and "I use my limp wrist to hand over my credit card," are liberated from their consuming ways.

Similar opposition has begun overseas as well. Last year, at Dia de Orgullo Gay, Barcelona's pride parade, a group of gay and lesbian activists blocked the procession with shopping carts, holding up the parade for at least half an hour, chanting "we are not for

sale" and waving placards stenciled "No to the pink peseta!" In Sweden, queer activists staged the first Stockholm Shame in 2001, which attracted nearly 2,000 people.

"The reason for the festival was that we thought that pride had become too commercial, lame, and boring," says Daniel Bergquist, a Stockholm Shame organizer. "It was just bright colors, sponsors logos and mainstream music and awful gay 'artists.'" This year, organizers of Stockholm Shame are billing their alternative festival, which will include film screenings, workshops, debates, bands and djs, as "Like Pride—but fun."

Like-minded organizing also took place in Toronto and Oslo. Last year in London, activists staged La Di Dah as an alternative to Mardi Gras, England's pride celebration.

"Mardi Gras, the main gay pride event in London, and the UK, began in 1999. It replaced London Pride, which ended after the Pride Trust collapsed after Pride '97 with huge debts. Mardi Gras was set up by a new group of gay businessmen, and for the first time there was a compulsory entry charge," explains Boitel and Victor Victor, two anarchists who attended La Di Dah. "Attendance fell dramatically and a lot of people became disaffected-

philanthropy going on here," says Victor Victor. "Their sponsorship decisions are no doubt influenced by this ongoing belief—or myth—often perpetuated by the mainstream gay media, that the gay community values and stays loyal to companies who are seen as being 'gay-friendly.'"

The myth Victor Victor is referring to is the market research conducted and distributed by gay marketing firms in the early 1990s leading to the widespread belief that queer consumers are, besides untapped, a well-educated market with high levels of disposable income. Groups like Simmons Market Research Bureau, Mulryan/Nash, Overlooked Opinions, Rivendell, *American Demographics*, a mainstream trade magazine, and Grant Lukenbill's *Untold Millions: Positioning Your Business for the Gay and Lesbian Consumer Revolution* all forecasted an economic boom in discovering the "queer market." In 1991, Overlooked Opinions announced that gay men made an average annual income of \$42,889, a number significantly higher than the general income of men and women. But the figures were inaccurate.

"The trouble with their so-called research is they used samples

"I look at it and think, 'Is this what I spend the last 31, 32 years of my life struggling for—the right of corporations like Coors beer, that funds anti-gay right wing organizations . . .



ed with the growing crass commercialization of the event, and the very fact their pride event had been taken away from them by these businessmen who commercialized and commodified the event, and then attempted to sell it back to us."

Citing the lack of creative opportunities for attendants, sponsorship from companies like Virgin, restrictive entrance fees, and the campaigning of issues that are largely considered mainstream—such as gay marriage, mortgage rights, and military inclusion—La Di Dah followed London's Mardi Gras parade, in which activists carried banners reading "Pride not Profit" and "Pervert Power" and marched with the International Union of Sexworkers. Activists say nearly 400 people attended the free, alternative event at Finsbury Park, which included vegan meals from Food not Bombs, an information tent with DIY sex toy workshops, and music.

This year, Boitel and Victor Victor helped organized a more low-key alternative pride event. Titled "Queer Mutiny," a pirate theme was adopted, including the slogan "Queer Mutiny not Gay Community—I'd rather be a pirate than join the Navy."

"It makes us question what Mardi Gras has become—rather than being a time to celebrate and demonstrate, is it now merely a marketing opportunity for these corporations to plug their latest wares to a captive audience? The corporations obviously wouldn't put money in unless they were expecting to get some return on their investment. We doubt there's any genuine unquestioning

of gay media consumers. They had a disproportionately educated, white, and as it turned out, male audience," insists Alexandra Chasin, author of *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*. "They interviewed a nonrandom sample of the gay community and used it to represent the whole community. On a social scientific level, it was bogus research."

Despite revelations of inaccurate statistics and unrepresentative samples, this image still exists. According to the Gay Financial Network, the "tangible assets of the gay and lesbian community in the US exceed \$800 billion. Within the whole gay and lesbian market, figures show that 3.2 million own stocks and about 3.7 million have a home mortgage." The report, released on August 15 of this year further states "in the group of gay and lesbian online users, 31 percent or about 1.5 million earn over \$50,000 a year: 4.9 percent or about 235,000 earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 a year" and that "recent studies show that when offered products and services of similar quality, a staggering 87.73 percent of gay and lesbian clients would purchase products and services identified and marketed directly to them."

Chasin, the former board of directors co-chair for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, says the reason for fabricated research is simple. "The purpose of the research was to persuade 'mainstream corporate advertisers' to move into the gay media."

Joshua Gamson, a sociology professor at the University of San Francisco agrees with Chasin. "It's not like it's just discovered by marketers. There are gay people who are actively taking that market niche strategy as a means to increase visibility and increasing resources in the community and so on," he explains.

Slouched in his chair, the beige walls of the professor's new office are still bare from his recent arrival. Gamson, the author of *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*, says he hasn't attended pride in at least three years. Speaking low, Gamson mentions he was once part of the ACT UP movement and says that pride now feels "bought." Those feelings have led to concerns over accountability and the edging out of radical politics in the gay and lesbian movement.

"I think one of the things that is going on is that grassroots activists are realizing they're being pushed out of the loop and that's true. I think that's accurate and they need to fight. When the movement is being transformed into a market and emptied out of a lot of its more radical politics, those people on the radical side of things should be screaming and yelling and should be providing alternatives," he says.

Though to Gamson, the argument isn't as simple as activists may make it seem. "Gay pride is not apolitical. Even when it looks apolitical, it's not apolitical to be taking the streets. Even if you're taking the streets with Absolute Vodka banners, there is a politic to that and it's not all conservative," he says, his voice beginning to rise. "We've arrived at visibility, but we haven't arrived at political equality and sometimes people mistake those two for the same thing."

Chasin explains the dichotomy this way: "The politics are liberal as opposed to radical. Of course it's political; it's about entrance into mainstream practices rather than contesting established practices. It's a politics that serves the same fraction of the community represented by the research."

A few weeks before LAGAI's Sellebrity auction, Gay Shame San Francisco staged the satire-laced Gay Shame awards at Harvey Milk Plaza. San Francisco's second annual Gay Shame, this year's event captured local media attention when awards were doled out to groups and individuals whom the activists claim have sold out the queer community.

The San Francisco pride parade was awarded "Best Target Marketing", with Gay Shame San Francisco contending San Francisco's pride celebration "has become little more than a giant opportunity for corporations to target market to gay consumers. Gay pride should be about celebrating our diverse sexual identities, instead of an endless, gated procession of corporate banners." The "In" award (Celebrities who should never have come out of the closet) went to Rosie O'Donnell because "after years of fiercely denying she's a lesbian and professing she has crushes on numerous straight celebrities, Rosie finally came out—right as her talk show ended, and just in time to sell her new autobiography. We don't need America's favorite whitebread closet case as our gay role model." O'Donnell beat out Pim Fortuyn and George Michael for the award.

Mattilda (Matt Bernstein Sycamore), who helped organize both New York and San Francisco Gay Shame, says that these events

are not just aimed at confronting the consumerism and rigid identity that gay and lesbian pride has become. Infusing camp, glamour, and politics, such gatherings are also a way to hold gays and lesbians in positions of power responsible for their actions.

"This is a lot of what Gay Shame is about: What do gay people do when they get power and, or, acceptance." Attacking Zephyr reality, a gay owned reality company in the Castro and Robert Barn, the director of the Mayor's Office on AIDS and HIV Policy in San Francisco, Mattilda continues. "Their ability to make money off of the symbol of pride and not give anything back, that's scary to me and I really feel that those people need to be held accountable."

Mattilda's flat, located in the middle of the Tenderloin district speaks volumes to his personality. Standing in the hallway of his tenement building, you wouldn't expect such a dazzling apartment. The walls are all painted bright colors. On them, self-made posters—both political and non—hang. His computer desk is a clutter of fliers, notes, odd-issues of zines, half way read newspapers and over a dozen yellow post-its. Though we sit, his body language indicates a typically active body restrained. The quickness of his arms subside a bit when he reflects upon the Gay Shame awards.

"People were really, really into it. We were kind of expecting 'Oh no, it's a good thing this stage is a few feet off the ground because we're going to be burning these rainbow flags and people are going to attack us.' People loved it. They were screaming for it. They were chanting. Some people were annoyed or just walked away, but a lot of people really joined in," he recalls, still excited from the success of the Gay Shame awards. "People were really there for the queer politics and that was really exciting. They were there for the politics and they were there to have fun."

Though none of the alternative pride events, such as Gay Shame, are formally connected and are organized at a grassroots level, each group's anger, frustration and alienation rings universal with the next. Organizers of pride events have tried to publicly address some of their critic's concerns. According to San Francisco's Pride Committee director Witherington, surveys over the last five years by the San Francisco pride committee found that one in five participants strongly disagrees with the level of corporate sponsorship. Acknowledging that pride organizers have been careful in screening sponsors (San Francisco LGBT pride celebration committee does not accept donations or allow sponsorship from tobacco companies) and will continue to do so, Witherington contends that the mainstream pride movement may never satisfy some gay and lesbian activists.

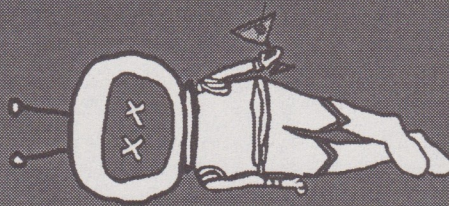
"A lot of people forget that the very first parade that was criticized for losing sight of the original founders of the movement was in 1974. So this is nothing new and the parade has had corporate sponsors for over 15 years," he says. "I don't think it's necessarily a case that there is sponsorship, it's a case of what kind of sponsorship and to what degree. There are some people who say there should be no sponsors at all, but then, I guess they have been angry every since 1974." ©

Portions of this article originally appeared in *Motherjones.com* as "A Question of Pride." Special thanks to Will Tacy.

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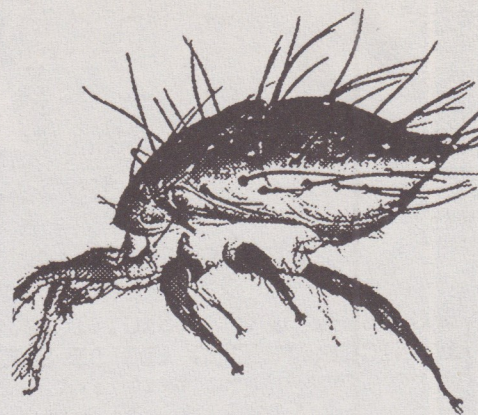
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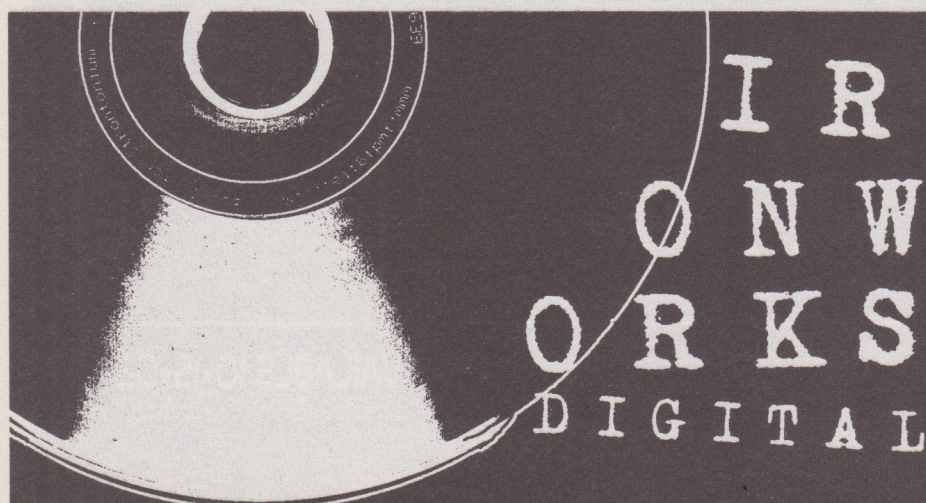


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I have a strange relationship with music.

It is strange by virtue of what I need from it. Somedays, it's the simple things: distraction, enter-

tainment, the sticky joy garnered only from Timbaland/Missy E. beats. Then, sometimes, most times, usually early in the part of morning that people call night time, most especially lately, I am painfully aware of every single thing that I need from music, embarrassed by what I ask of it. Having developed such a desperately great belief in the power of music to salve and heal me, I ask big, over and over again. I have an appetite for deliverance, and am not really interested in trying to figure out whether it qualifies me as lucky or pathetic.

The stereo is just past halfway to as-loud-as-it-will-go, the rolling bass of Van Morrison's "TB Sheets" (the first song on side two of the album of the same name) is moving throughout the house, its punctuating bump'n'grind ricocheting off the parquet floor, sound filling every room. This makes the fourth night in the last five that I'm doing this same routine—lights out, alone, in a precarious emotional state not worth explaining, dancing, though in a way that is barely dancing, because lying down is out of the question on a night as hot as this, and lying down means motionless, and there's really no being still right now.

TB Sheets is a great album on which seven of the eight songs are about Van Morrison, and a girl he loves, who is dying of tuberculosis. I can count on one hand the times that I have made it through the entire album without crying. It's brutal and never fails to deliver in its relentless humanity. Some songs detail the recent past, a golden reminiscence of some then-average day ("Who Drove the Red Sports Car") that now will have to be enough for a lifetime; he's asking her, "Do you remember? / Do you remember?" insinuating some intimate exchange, some forgotten little secret. He needs her to remember. "Beside You" is a fierce, rambling pledge—he's plead-

ing for her confidence, in a torrential cadence of half-sentences, nearly unintelligible, that sound like directions someplace, before the decimating crescendo: "I'll stand / Beside you / Be-side you / Oh child / Never ever ever wonder why / Lord Nevernevernever never no never wonder why / Lord / It's gotta be/ It had to be..." He sounds drunk, a little off-key, hysterical, now saying everything he ever meant to say to her and didn't, confessing himself, as if this act of deathbed desperation, this unbearable love, this compassion to the point of oneness with her, if she knew it, if she could really understand it, and take it in....it might just save her. All of this is cast out amongst ominous, trilling B3 sustain, and repetitive guitar, droning off into bottomless tension. (A version of this song appears later on *Astral Weeks*, a version which is totally chardonnay and mystic gamelan flutes and angelic production, in comparison to the decidedly drinkin'-straight-from-the-bottle, succulent, lo-fi, four-bar, party-blues hip sway of the original).

The title track, "TB Sheets" is nine minutes and 44 seconds of Van rending an exquisite topography of bleak human expanse; an outline of him collapsing under the weight of incontrovertible mortal pall, in a dialect too casual and acrimonious for how well he knows her. He's unable to be of any use—offering up only faint, chilled comfort ("Julie, baby, it ain't natural for you to cry"); then, later, he fumbles for mutuality ("On the street / I cried for ya"), unable to get far away fast enough from his fear, evading the knowledge of exactly what all this means, the finality of it. Details give way to a much deeper reckoning: "I can almost smell / The TB sheets / On yr sick bed...I gotta go." Audibly choking for air, and again repeating, with frail cogency, "I gotta go, baby / I gotta go / Gotta go," over and over, like a mantra of absolution, seeking another set of chances, burdened by survival.

But it's too late; he's in for all he's got.

It's a song of failure. It's realizing that sometimes the best you've got to give isn't much of anything at all.

My copy of *TB Sheets* is filthy with fingerprints and lengthy scratches from spending more years out of the jacket than in. It's a record I listen to so frequently, I doubt if I could even locate the jacket. It's my mom's copy—from before she was my mom—which I

inherited, when, upon moving to LA, I asked her to send me the records I'd left behind in the garage. The box that arrived contained 60-some LPs, including every single Bonnie Raitt album, Quincy Jones' *The Dude*, some Steely Dan, three Van Morrison records, and none of the Joan Jett, Michael Jackson, and Econochrist LPs I was expecting.

Aside from *TB Sheets*, I got VM's *His Band and The Street Choir* (a brassy saxophone-shaped valentine to real American rhythm-and-blues roots music), which may be my favorite album, period, solely because of four songs, all of which dwarf me with their weary humanity, their yearning for closeness, songs begging for spiritual grift. Van, humbled before his time, tangled, willingly, in the rapture of true dependence on God masked as bittersweet paeans to girls ("If I Ever Needed Someone"), lust for life and rock'n 'roll. There are some mod jams, old time R&B rave-ups with warm horn lines (i.e., "Domino"), which I love as well, but unfortunately now identify (like "Brown Eyed Girl") with *Big Chill* sentiments, Vietnam-movie soundtracks, and radio stations programmed in my parents car. Then there are the quiet hymns: "I'll Be Your Lover Too," where it's just Van, his acoustic guitar, brushed drumming so inobtrusive that it seems coincidental, and some of the most aching, knowing silence ever put to tape.

Dancing in pitch dark rooms, rooms illuminated exclusively by the tiny light on the turntable, is an activity which fits very well with my ideas of "rock-critic behavior" (which is like normal music-fan behavior, but a substantially more pitiful and indulgent). It's behavior that comes from an inextricable soul-entanglement with music that is insular, boundless, devoted, celebratory and willfully pathetic. It's my fantasized notion of what a REAL rock-critic scenario is like: a "special" manual typewriter, ashtrays full of thin roaches, an extensive knowledge of Mott The Hoople lyrics, a ruthless seeking for the life of life in free jazz sides (and, perhaps, some unchecked alcoholism). May also include: a fetishizing of THE TRUTH (which always turns gory, no matter what records you listen to), detoured attempts to illuminate the exact heaven of Eric B & Rakim/ Rocket from The Tombs with the fluorescent lighting of yr 3 a.m. genius stroke prose; and, most, most of all an insatiable appetite for deliv-

erance, deliverance that cannot be coaxed by any other means (not even fucking or narcotized sleep or endless freeway or the good lord whispering in yr ear). And oh what motherfucking deliverance when you find it! Have you ever heard Bad Brains "Pay To Cum" before!??) It's exhaustively chronicling what it is that artists have that we mere mortals do not; what is it that they offer up that we are unable or unwilling to manufacture ourselves. They offer a connection to the disconnected, making all our secrets bearable; it comes in the verses and choruses from the otherside: ornate in their undoing, gambling with their joy, their moral irredemption, their humility, using failure to build a podium to reach god, their faked orgasms and in-between-song skits, their solos, their clever rhymes, their crippled expectations, their petulant drifting, their still-unmet Oedipal needs, their fuckless nights, their not-so-gradual disappearance from reality, their rodeo blues, their ghetto living/ghetto dying, their unflagging romantic belief, the sweaty embrace of crunk parties, being an outlaw for your love, Reaganomics, the summer they'll never forget, the power of funk, hanging at the Nice Nice w/ the eye patch guy, truly American apathy, taking hoes to the Cheesecake Factory, getting head in drop-top Benzes, isolation, the benefits of capitalism, screwing Stevie Nicks in the tall green grass, the swirling death dust, the underground and none of the above.

I want it. I need it. Because all these records, they give me a language to decipher just how fucked I am. Because there is a void in my guts which can only be filled by songs.

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*Though every prospect
pleases*

*And only man is vile
—Reginald Heber*

*Hey, I resemble that
remark! —The
Three Stooges*

Every reformed drunk has a story about the time he or she realized this drinking thing might be getting out of hand. Naturally I'm no exception.

I had nipped into a drinking and dancing joint whose main advantage—only advantage, in fact—was that no one there knew me. At least I hoped so.

This was in the days when I was acquiring a public profile as the head of a fast-rising punk rock record label, and I wanted to be sure not to set a bad example for "the kids."

If I'm going to be honest, I was more concerned about not embarrassing myself in front of people who knew me. If I was going to do anything that might threaten the carefully cultivated image I tried to maintain on the punk scene, I made a point of doing it somewhere else.

The world being a small place, and San Francisco far smaller, I doubt I was successful at this charade, but one of the attractions of alcohol is that it renders you temporarily oblivious to things that are blindingly obvious to everyone else.

Feeling festive, I thought it was time I got on the dance floor and showed off my moves. I was thinking along the lines of *Saturday Night Fever*, where the ordinary dancers stood back in awe to admire John Travolta's footwork, but for some reason no one was interested in giving me room to move.

In fact, they seemed annoyed that I'd decided to join them. So much so, that they kept bumping into me, and not in a friendly way, either. Soon they were giving me elbows in the ribs and none-too-gentle shoves to propel me away from them.

Ah well, I thought; they were just jealous of my superior skills, and angry that I was showing them up. I decided to move to another part of the dance floor in search of a more congenial crowd.

But no matter where I went, I got the same reception. It was the strangest thing. In my opinion, I was looking great, dancing great, feeling great, and yet everyone seemed pissed off at me. What a lame crowd, I thought. I should go somewhere more chic and stylish instead of hanging out with these low-lifers.

With that in mind, I—gracefully, I thought—headed off the dance floor. But as badly as the people had greeted my arrival, they seemed to have an even bigger problem with my departure. All I wanted was to get out of there, but whichever way I turned; my path was blocked by one klutz or another.

I took a deep breath and tried to push my way through, only to come face to face with somebody's fists while simultaneously being kicked from behind by some flamboyant little queen. I swung

around in a rage and challenged them all to fight, but after a bit more pushing and shoving, finally found my way over to the bar.

I couldn't understand why people were behaving so badly. Even the bartender seemed to be serving everyone else and ignoring me. Didn't he know who I was? I worked myself into a righteous snit until I realized that I wasn't too sure who I was either.

Or where I was, for that matter, except that it was a place that sucked. It was time I got out of there. I slid off my barstool and headed for the exit.

That proved harder than I'd expected. I remembered climbing a flight of stairs when I'd come in, so I worked out that I'd have to go down a flight of stairs to get out. But where were these stairs? I wandered around and around, but kept ending up back in the same place. No stairs. No doors, even. Didn't Sartre write a play about this?

The way I saw it, there were two solutions. I could stay there and drink; sooner or later the place would close, and I would be shooed out with the rest of the crowd. Or I could follow the nearest wall, keeping my hand on it to make sure it didn't escape, and sooner or later I was bound to come to an exit. (The more obvious solution, asking directions, never occurred to me. After the way I'd been treated, I wasn't about to stoop to having conversations with these losers.)

Having steeled my nerves with another beer and whiskey combo, I started on my expedition. Keeping my hand on the wall wasn't easy, because so many people were leaning or sitting against it. For some reason they seemed annoyed when I more or less shoved them out of the way. I got dirty looks and rude remarks, but I was undeterred. I was marveling over my brilliance at devising such a strategy. Why, had I been born in an earlier age, I might have been one of the world's great explorers.

I made my way down a long aisle that kept getting narrower and narrower. Never mind; I could see that at the end of the bar, it widened again, and I was sure beyond that there'd be a door. There was just one problem: some idiot was blocking my way, and I couldn't get past him.

I tried going around him, but no matter which way I moved, he'd move the same way. I even made the concession of temporarily letting go of the wall so I could slide past him on the other side. Nope. He was determined to stop me.

I was getting mightily pissed off, and instinctively clenched my fists. If this was going to turn into a fight, I was going to be ready. But the idea of getting in a barroom brawl and ending up in jail, or, worse, getting beat up, didn't appeal. I thought I'd try one more time, and just pushed forward, figuring he'd move out of my way if I pushed hard enough.

BLAM! He was a lot tougher than I'd imagined. My nose hurt, my whole face hurt, my hands and stomach and chest as well. I'd walked right into him, and it was as if he was made of iron. He hadn't budged, and I was hurting.

I heard some laughter, and wondered what was supposed to be

so funny. Slowly reality dawned. I hadn't walked into a person. I had walked into a full-length mirror. Thank God I hadn't followed my first impulse, to punch the jerk in the face, or I might still be picking glass splinters out of my knuckles.

The idea of nearly getting into a drunken fistfight with myself has symbolic and philosophical implications so obvious that most writers wouldn't bother pointing them out. And I'd like very much to be one of those writers, but I can't help myself. I like obvious things, because they're the ones nobody seems to notice.

Which brings me to what I really wanted to talk about. I'm rather pleased with this topic, so pleased, in fact, that I made up a brand new word to describe it. The word is *anthropophobia*, and, much to my surprise, it wasn't in my big, fat dictionary. Okay, I'll admit I finally found it in an online dictionary referring to obscure medical conditions, but for the purposes I'm using it, it's a brand new word.

I was surprised to find that was the case, since it seems like such an obvious word. For those of you not up on your Greek, "anthropo" means "man" or "human," and "phobia" means "fear." Being good PC punks, you've no doubt bandied about the notion of "homophobia." Same principle.

But who could be afraid of humans, you ask? Most of the world's animals, for starters, which goes to show how anthropocentric you are. Leaving aside the fuzzy bunnies cowering in their holes, however, I'm reminded of when I heard a psychologist remark, "There's a lot of homophobia in the gay community."

I thought that was a ridiculous thing to say until I thought about it a while. Hopefully it won't take you as long to figure out what I mean when I say there's a lot of anthropophobia in the human community.

Take that little snippet of poetry at the top of the column. "Though (usually misquoted as 'where') every prospect pleases, and only man is vile" is much beloved of moralists and environmentalists, who interpret it as an indictment of how wicked man has mucked up the "natural" world.

It's often used to refer to a place that hasn't yet been touched—disfigured, if you will—by the hand of man. A magnificent vista of mountains or canyons or seashore, for example, where there's no sign that man has ever walked before, let alone thrown up any of his highways, parking lots, or fast food joints.

It's a beguiling myth, but a myth nonetheless. How, after all, did the poet arrive at this lovely spot if it wasn't via a road or trail blazed by man? How did he write down his reflections without using pen, paper and language, all devised by man? What would be the point of writing them down if not to be heard and benefited from by other men? Most obviously of all, isn't the poet himself a member of that same despicable species?

We seem to have divided loyalties when it comes to how we feel about people. People in general, well, they're a problem. They cause pollution, start wars, hog all the parking places and buy up all the concert tickets. People in particular, namely ourselves and our close

friends and family, we're different. We're the high-minded, great-hearted, pure and innocent ones who constantly suffer because of the depredations, greed and shortsightedness of *those* people.

But it's not even that simple. We even have divided loyalties within ourselves. There's the well-intentioned part, the one that's always going to take up jogging, go on a fat-free diet, and start bicycling to work instead of driving an environmentally disastrous smogmobile. Then there's the part that's too much in a hurry today for a good breakfast or exercise, and has to jump in the car if there's going to be time for a couple Egg McMuffins on the way to work.

Most religions and schools of philosophy have interpreted this phenomenon as proof that we have a dual nature: a godlike, transcendental, spiritual one, and a diabolical, crass, materialistic and fleshly one. This notion has kept priests and their latter-day counterparts, psychologists, in business for millennia now.

It's also contributed a great deal of anxiety and frustration to life on planet earth, something which has only increased with the greater complexity of modern times. Freud maintained that the more civilized we were, the more neurotic we were going to be, because of having constantly to suppress our "natural" desires to rape, plunder and kill. In another era, he would have started a new religion to deal with it, but because he was a "modern" man, he coated his age-old doctrines with the veneer of science.

Christianity gave us the Holy Trinity, Freud refined the doctrine into a tripartite psyche, and the Three Stooges (Moe: superego, Larry: ego, Curly: id) produced a series of instructional films. And here we are in the post-everything 21st century, more convinced than ever that something is terribly, dreadfully wrong. Having killed off the usual suspects like God and the Devil, we have no one to blame it on. We fall back on Shakespeare's analysis: "The fault (dear Brutus) is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

There's a grave misunderstanding at work here. We simultaneously overvalue and undervalue our importance and place in the universe. Central to this misunderstanding is the idea that humans are somehow apart or separate from nature. If only, we sigh, people could live in harmony with the "natural" environment. If only we operated with the purity and simplicity of our animal brothers instead of the deviousness and self-centeredness of humans.

We even go ga-ga over babies and little children because they're "innocent," more like animals than people, not yet corrupted by the wicked ways of man. In reality, the only reason babies are so cute is to keep us from dashing the little bastards' brains out on the nearest rock. Being "cute" is pretty much the only survival skill they possess, which is probably just as well, because babies are anything but "innocent" or "pure."

In fact, they are completely amoral, think only of themselves, their needs, and their pleasure, and couldn't care less if you die in the cause of providing for them. As long, of course, as someone takes your place in catering to their every whim.

It's only after several years, in fact, of being trained and disciplined that babies are fit to operate in civilized society. Animals are

even worse: most of them, even the most domesticated ones, will eat you at the first opportunity, and as far as sexual mores or basic consideration for our fellow creatures, forget it. We'd quickly wind up dead or in prison (and rightly so) for living that kind of "natural" life.

So how did humans get such a bad rap? Okay, deep ecologists, start whinnying on about the extinction of countless species, the desertification of whole continents, the alteration of the environment to the point where it might threaten the existence of life itself. There is that, plus the fact that in many of our large cities you can't go to the corner shop for a pint of milk without risking getting your head split open. But have you checked out life in the nearest jungle lately?

I'm wary of hauling out clichés like, "Man is the only animal that feels shame," partly because they undermine my argument, but more because I have no way of knowing what if anything any other animal thinks or feels. In any event, I'm disinclined to believe that there is any "only" applying to man, that we are just as common and just as special as anything else in the world.

This is a really difficult concept to get one's head around. The minute we start reflecting on ourselves or our nature, we set up a false dichotomy, an illusory separateness from all else that exists. It's a prerequisite of consciousness that we operate from a premise that is demonstrably impossible: we can no more be "aware" of ourselves than the eye can see itself or the hand can grasp itself.

So we make up stories to fill in the gaps. Put more bluntly, we lie to ourselves. It's in a good cause, sure, because it makes existence itself possible. But it's still a lie, and maybe that's where our constant uneasiness, our constant sense that there is something wrong at the heart of our being, originates.

The Hindus and some of the other Eastern religions hold that we're just playing hide-and-seek with ourselves, throwing the veil called *maya* over our true nature so that we can experience the adventure of individual existence. The Western religions tend more toward the view that all the trouble originated when we foolishly struck out on our own instead of sticking with God. The modernists and post-modernists claim respectively not to know and not to care.

But the war goes on, within and without. Man may not be the only animal that commits suicide (the lemmings, among others have been at it much longer) or kills for pleasure (your cute little house cat is as vicious a killing machine as nature has ever devised), but certainly no other species pursues either aim so avidly and so creatively.

So why all the self-loathing? Is it just a case of shadow-boxing (or, as in my case, mirror-boxing) with our own souls? Or are we mere pawns in some larger game, so many cosmic microbes eating our way through our home planet with no more conscience or consciousness than mold spores turning a perfectly healthy chunk of cheese into dust?

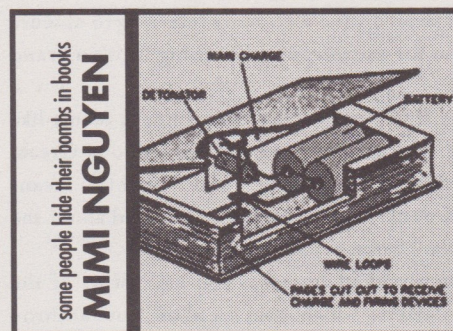
Well, I certainly don't know, so I hope you weren't counting on me to provide you with any answers. All I can suggest is that if someone keeps getting in your way and frustrating your every attempt to

get around, over, under or through him, you consider my experience in front of the mirror before attempting to punch his lights out.

...

Dear readers:

In *Punk Planet* #51 a no doubt well-meaning but over-zealous copy editor changed a word in my column which significantly altered my meaning and intent. If you haven't read the column yet, or if you're ever inclined to re-read it, the word "estimable" should have been "esteemable." I have no particular quarrel with the word "estimable" (even if it does sound like something Samuel Johnson would have said about one of his 18th century contemporaries), but it doesn't express what I meant to say. "Esteemable" does.



Long ago I learned my lessons from comic books. I learned that mutant bodies were powerful but vulnerable bodies; vulnerable because such powers made

one a target for social control, prejudice, enmity and evildoers seeking recruits, vulnerable because these mutant energies threaten to overcome and eclipse the fragile vessel of the body.

In 1980 the Marvel universe introduced the superhero team called the New Mutants, a multicultural crew of misfit teens led by an ascetically thin Vietnamese refugee Xi'an Coy Manh, the daughter of a South Vietnamese colonel with an evil twin (and also mutant) brother and a criminal ganglord uncle. Recruited by Professor Xavier for his New England School for Gifted Youngsters and called Karma in her X incarnation, she was a grim and conscientious figure, able to seize control of other people's minds and bodies—a fortuitous alteration of her genetic code in the aftermath of her mother's exposure to mutagenic chemical defoliants used during the war. The luckless subjects of her power would become extensions of her will and her senses—prosthetic manikins speaking in her voice, attacking their fellows with their physical strength or armory where she had little of both. Though she could possess several subjects simultaneously, her control would be fragmented and sometimes awkward, distributed among the hosts.

In many ways, it was a curious power that left her vulnerable to physical threat and harm. Her own flesh was not protected by any aspect of her power, and she was forced to find some discrete corner or shield herself with the bodies of her more physically powerful team members. And the experience drained her; often she would eventually collapse from the exhaustion of controlling another's mind and body. If she remained in possession of her subject for too long, she would begin to leak into the subject, or the subject into her—and her distinct personality and memories

would be melded with those of the host. Nine issues into the series Karma had been captured by an enemy called the Shadow King and disappeared, only to reappear herself possessed by his disembodied spirit and of monstrously large proportions, having lost both her psychic strength and bodily control.

When I was young I sought to develop my own psionic strengths, hoping perhaps my mother, too, had been exposed to the same chemical substances. This did not seem wholly unreasonable; after all, like Coy Manh, I had relatives in the former South Vietnamese army, a brother with definite potential for evil-doing, and an enduring sense of being a categorical mistake. Like the mutant teenagers that populated the Marvel universe, I felt my birthright was to exist "outside" the normative social body of central Minnesota. I reasoned that this awkward, preadolescent exterior—garbed in mismatched, secondhand clothes and thick eyeglasses—would serve me well as a secret identity for the while; but my real self (which would arrive with puberty, as it did in the comic books) would be eruptive, powerful, and wield a mastery of my body and my surroundings that I didn't yet possess.

However, no revelations were forthcoming, and after a while I consoled myself with the assurance that there were dangers I would never be then forced to face, so frighteningly realized by Karma's own possession and loss of self.

For years, the appeal of comic books faded, and punk rock had come and gone as my chosen venue for eruption and social mutancy. But in a Boston comic book shop, between sessions at an MIT conference on race and digital space, I discovered an old back issue of the *New Mutants* series, with a cover featuring a possessed Karma as an enormous puppetmaster, dangling and jerking her chosen avatars (her former New Mutants team members) at the ends of their strings.

Because story arcs in comic books are ruled by fateful coincidence and constant resurrection, I recognized this encounter for what it was—a fortuitous link between the mutants that appeared in both my preteen imaginary and in my graduate work. The monster, the cyborg, the freak—the mutant acts as a metaphor, a representation of social structures and cultural systems in a seemingly new, complex and contradictory configuration. She appears as a consequence of the social forces we cannot manage or control, a symptom of our fears and fantasies about power, vulnerability, and the blurring of the boundaries we define ourselves and others by—human/monster, masculine/feminine, inside/outside, primitive/civilized. We have histories and presents in which women, queers, and people of color have been denied access to the category of the "human" by a multitude of scientific and medical discourses, social institutions, and material practices. Populating our science fictions, the figure of the mutant can critique these oppositions, these relations of power which privilege one half the binary against the other, and the material and ideological forces which endeavor to define "human" against the "non-human," and the stakes upon which this distinction depends.

While a minor character in the Marvel pantheon, Karma is massively traumatized: she grew up during the war in Vietnam as bombers and bullets flew overhead; her parents were imprisoned in a reeducation camp until she freed them with her powers; their escape on an overcrowded fishing boat was violently marked by the attack of Thai pirates; too weak from hunger to use her powers, she was forced to watch while the pirates murdered her father and raped the women, including her mother; her mother then died the day the survivors were rescued by the US Navy; responsible for herself and her young siblings Leong and Nga, she moved to New York City where her ex-general, secret crimelord uncle kidnapped Leong and Nga in an effort to force her cooperation in his schemes.

Originally gathered to fight "evil mutants" who (of course) sought to subjugate humanity, these teenage New Mutants are nonetheless viewed with fear and suspicion by the non-mutant population. Flanked by her teammates, Karma is an admittedly odd figure; often she holds her head in her hands, the only outward indication of the use of her powers. (The others erupt into black masses of solar energy, transform into animals, project spirit forms, or burst out at breakneck speed.) In the comics her powers are visually rendered as a kind of boundary-breaking psychic ray—it extends multi-hued (but usually in shades of fuchsia) from her furrowed brow to envelop her usually unwilling but violent opponents, traversing panels to intervene in other spaces. In the fashion of all comic book characters, given both to lengthy exposition and statements of the obvious, she might declare, "Your day is done, villain! Your mind—your body—belong to Karma!"

Taken as a kind of evidence (and because comic books often wage battles across titles and temporalities) Karma can be read as a warning about the dangers of the "just human," the sovereign, individual subject of our contemporary liberal humanist discourses. Against the appeal that "we are all just human," "all just Americans," "all just women," or "all just activists," or any other category which flattens the histories of our differences in the name of a collective, we have the mutant to remind us of the dangers of abstraction or the imposition of a universal norm, and the inescapably material and ideological forces which make us who we are.

The history of this mutant is continuously apprehended in the present. The source of her powers, her ability to possess other bodies and minds, can be traced to a series of technological interventions in the war and to her DNA. The history of Karma but also Xi'an Coy Manh (her "secret identity") is embedded in the historical reality of the biochemical weaponry of the US military-industrial complex, and necessarily references a disturbing past of neo-colonialism and medical experimentation.

She is a mutant whose creation could have easily resulted in physical deformity or damage—as it did for others whose exposure to the chemical defoliants did not end so fortuitously—and yet she is

nonetheless a freak. What's more, she is a cyborg because she is Vietnamese. Her adventures are constant reminders of this past—she joins the New Mutants and acts as Professor Xavier's secretary so she might continue to provide for her siblings, who somehow contrive to be kidnapped again and again by various villains, including their uncle. As a "new mutant," she displays the arrogance of the war's engineers not on the surfaces of her body but from *within*, projecting these properties of possession and control onto others. As a New Mutant, her powers mirror the conditions of her creation.

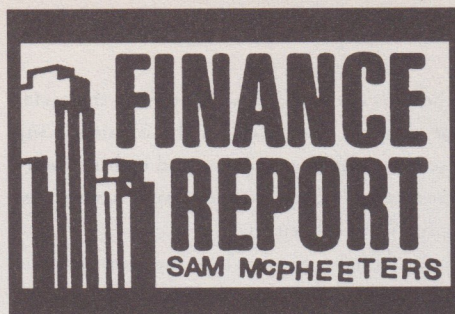
And as a mutant, Karma must pass for human or risk being the object of fear and hostility, but to do so she must deny the history of her genetic mutation in an attempt to approximate the ideal (non-mutant) or be marked (by the X) as an "illegitimate" human being. The trauma of passing is realized in the "secret identity," which is not the mutant superhero but *the persona of normalcy*. This secret identity implicates the social powers, which produce, situate, and constrain legitimate/illegitimate subjects. This subject who suppresses is provided a kind of disguise, to seem as if she were "human," like all the rest, an abstract "person" that disguises her particularity. But the impossibility of this disembodiment erupts repeatedly.

While Karma may pass for human, she cannot otherwise pass as other than Asian; the consequences of the first kind of passing may bear upon the second, in which her body is already marked as "foreign" in the West, and vice versa. The objectification of the Vietnamese by the US military as "mere gooks" during the intervention—and thus justifying the usage of napalm and biochemical defoliants—suggest that the hope to pass for human is precarious and a historical and political contingency. For the body that is understood as too much body—too much sex, too much skin, too much exposure, too much native, too much history—the ideal of the abstract "just human" is a violence.

As a mutant, Karma is a marginal being whose existence poses a question and a threat to the normative social body and to the status quo of human relations, *but not simply because of her powers*—these cannot be isolated from the historical conditions of her creation as a Vietnamese mutant. Last spotted as a pink-haired lesbian film student, she defected from superhero-dom because she could no longer abide by the comic book universe, which allowed little room for contradiction or complexity.

So I've begun collecting *New Mutants* comic books again in an effort to piece together a history of Karma, because I think others might also be able to learn a lesson from the comic books, because of the epistemic and corporeal violence involved in the production of her existence, because of the profound implications of her historically specific biotechnological transformation from human girl to *something more*.

You are jealous of my "We are all Billie Jean" T-shirt. Check out the ever-fantastic Pander Zine Distro for the second issue of the Race Riot (<http://www.panderzinedistro.com>). Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slander13@mindspring.com.



SHOW REVIEWS

[Note: this is a column I wrote for PP50 but didn't have time to finish. This now serves as a nationwide rebuttal to Jessica Hopper's scurrilous attack on

Southern California in the same issue which, although I haven't actually read it—on account I can't seem to find a copy of the magazine in any of the local stores—I'm sure was unwarranted and perhaps libelous and other bad adjectives. Enjoy.]

1. LE TIGRE / ERASE ERRATA IN POMONA, SATURDAY NIGHT

Tickets for a recent Friday night Le Tigre show at the El Rey Theater in West LA. were found online, sold for \$129 a pair. The sticky ethical questions raised by the sale masked a graver issue still; three tickets for the following night's Le Tigre concert at the Glass House in Pomona sold online for \$11.50. The realization has been a long time in coming: I live in the Poughkeepsie of Los Angeles. No one respects Pomona. The 30 minutes of drive time from my doorstep to the big city might as well be an expedition to the Mesozoic Yukon for the cosmopolitans coming the other way. Pomona is, as of this writing, the only city on the LA Times weather map listed with a qualifier ("Pomona/Fairplex" ... a signifier that decodes to; *once a year a county fair will be held on this barren spot in the desert*). This spring, Mexico City will receive its first Starbucks before Pomona does. It wasn't always this way. Frank Sinatra and Tippi Hedren used to buy hotdogs here when Pomona was a screening oasis. Pillsbury Hardcore were pioneering freaked-out hardcore in this town three presidents ago. What other city on earth can boast the birthplace of both seminal youth merchandising outlets of the '80s and '90s; Toxic Shock and Hot Topic?

Speaking of "Hot Topic", I think Le Tigre played this song. I'm not entirely sure. Saturday's show took place in the one building in Pomona I can't say I really care for, The Glass House. Like the El Ray, GH is the sort of large, faceless, bouncer-friendly venue that has a sneaky way of distracting from the enjoyment of the bands at hand (I've found myself comparing both clubs' to NY's Irving Plaza when talking with east coast friends, as much a gauge of crumbiness as size). Glass House security once forcibly parted me from a ballpoint pen on the grounds that it posed some sort of shanking threat. I've always had a brown spot on my heart for clubs like this. Staff jostles me, a friend gets patted down, and inevitably I'm summoning the god of colon cancer to sweep through the night, sprinkling his magic dust over the sleeping heads of my oppressors.

Which isn't nice. Or fair—these people are just doing their jobs, and not in that In-The-Dock-At-The-Hague kind of way, either². I understand there are trade-offs required when running an operation of this size and catering to this demographic. I didn't get stabbed with any pens. And the sound, unlike last year's LT show at The Smell in LA, was crisp, resonant and free from power outages. The worst one can reasonably say about this club is that its ceiling is cluttered with the sort of heavy duty, International Space Station-

looking aluminum light rig that may or may not kill a lot of people if an 8.9 earthquake hits. Tragic, yes, but also unavoidable.

2. QUIXOTIC / PINK & BROWN IN LOS ANGELES, LATER THAT SATURDAY NIGHT

One continues to The Smell in downtown LA, but the daily ration of cellular energy allocated for sociability is spent, leaving one drained and draped across a stinky couch, unable to appreciate the night's music. Not to put down The Smell's fine assortment of couches. As with so many aspects of this great space, the couches get less stinky with familiarity. Likewise, the bathroom, so utterly trashable on first glance, can actually serve as a nice sanctuary on heavily trafficked nights. And Jalesco, the Mexican gay bar around the corner on Main Street, so intimidating at first glance, is actually a decent place for one to obtain a brown bagged Tecate or engage in a bit of toilet stall rumpus.

No bouncers here either. The Smell is that rarest of commodities, a club run by people cool enough to pull the whole thing off but old enough to not suffer delusions of grandeur or fits of political infighting. I've found myself comparing the space to the late Ft. Thunder to east coast friends, as much a gauge of humanity's fundamental decency as size (although the walls of The Smell are barren of the reading material that made even the most boring of shows in Providence a treat, leaving me to leaf sadly through weird RCP-vegan manuals whenever I forget to bring a newspaper). The worst one can say about this place is that its seemingly unretrofitted brick structure will unfurl like socks in a dryer when the 8.9 hits.

3. CAT POWER / SOME HORRENDOUS CAUCASIAN GARAGE BAND, CLAREMONT, THE NEXT WEDNESDAY

Four days later it was time for the suave downtowners to make that trip to the Yukon. Cat Power's handlers had booked her in "Little Bridges", a performance hall on the lush campus of Pomona College, itself oddly located in Claremont, the wealthy, troubled, Morgan-Fairchild-nosed older stepsister to hardworking P-Town. Little Bridges' European grandeur and vastness is hard to surpass. This is a solid building. An 8.9 earthquake would hardly raise eyebrows in an audience here. Every mortar and joist is tight in the way only massive amounts of money can sustain. According to the college's website, a recent \$5.2 million dollar renovation saw the installation of new multi-story organ pipes, an "eight-inch [thick], resin-impregnated honeycombed structure that is bonded and screwed to the ceiling", over a hundred brand-new, hardwood sound-deflecting chairs, a reshaping of the rear and side walls, wainscoting, windows and balcony, resulting in an increase in reverberation "by a factor of 1.5." I'd seen the Bulgarian Women's Choir of Los Angeles here only a week earlier and can testify that the hall's sound really is quite amazing, a brutal display of Old Money power.

Which was why a Cat Power performance seemed so crucial as

a life experience, as simply unmissable as karaoke night at Carnegie Hall³. I arrived during the shameful opening indie band, enjoying the spare time to wander the plush lobby. From an unassuming bronze plaque set near the front door, I learned that Bridges Hall of Music had been built in 1914 as a sort of working mausoleum. "After brief years in the bloom of her youth," the plaque read, under a sad, half-relief angel, "Mabel Shaw Bridges passed into the unseen... this building has been erected by her parents." The unseen? At the risk of sounding tactless; had they ever found the poor young lady?

"Did you finish your zine?" I turned and saw Anthony, my sometimes employee. Shit. The zine. I'd forgotten to make the zine. How can one attend a Cat Power concert at Bridges Hall of Music without handing away free copies of their unnamed fanzine full of random photos of Amish people and car accidents and orangutans? I made the sort of sour face that says "You're fired" and excused myself for the men's room. Bathroom facilities; the Bridges family does not skimp in this department either. Even the itsy bitsy trash can spoke to some unattainable level of elegance, so tidy and tiny that I actually watched guys gingerly placing their waded up handtowels on top of the overflowing can, some humbling show of respect for the entire Bridges clan.

Back in the lobby, I talked with Erica, Station Supervisor of local KSPC, the event's sponsors and one of the absolute best college radio stations in America. KSPC is housed in the basement of the building next door. Several times have I gone to drop off a promo CD in their offices only to contemplate, on emerging into the sunlight, calling the DJ from the outdoor callbox and threatening violence if they didn't play a cut in the next five minutes.

The indie band finished playing and hopefully reassessed their lives. A buzz filled the great hall. Finding seats as if we were attending the opera, I was informed that the old singer of Pillsbury Hardcore was working sound. A different man, some heavysset college employee, wheeled out a grand piano. I nursed a sudden, private hope that this big fellow would reveal himself as Cat Power, busting out the hits on the Steinway.

But the real Cat Power arrived, a self-effacing wisp next to that giant piano (which went unused). She endured great waves of applause, sat on a stool and strummed. It was the quietest thing I have ever heard. To be fair, I didn't make it through the whole set. After the first 10 or 15 notes I got bored and left on shoes whose soles seemed, suddenly, to squeal like two wild boars just waking from deep anesthesia. I crossed through the outer hallway, cautious of the ghostly, gnashing head of Mabel Bridges, out of the building, across the several hundred foot Marston Quadrangle and into the student rec center, playing a few rounds of Zero Gunner until I grew fearful that the game's blips might drown out the performance across the campus grounds.

I took a walk. The menace of shadows cast by streetlight is, in Claremont, all illusion. Rare is the police chopper that hovers over this town. A friend lived here for over a decade and never locked

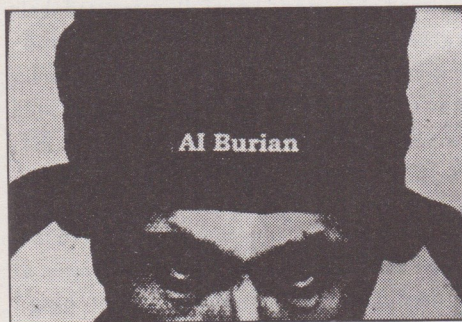
her door. Claremont on this night was serene, breezy, room temperature. But, of course, it's like that every night of the year. Peering over hedges and white picket fences, I tried my hardest to recall what it was about this part of the country that had me so bothered 10 years ago. What is it about this state that so galls the rest of the nation? What's not to like?

FOOTNOTES

1. Although there is one conspicuous difference in their operating styles, readers of late 2002: The Glass house uses those weird Ticketmaster tickets, printed on special, genetically modified paper that turns black from heat, apparently to thwart scanner scammers, terrorists and those who like to stow expensive concert tickets in their armpits, while the infinitely ritzier El Rey uses the kind of raggety-ass church raffle stubs one can buy for \$3.09 a roll at, say, the Staples two blocks east on Wilshire Blvd.

2. No, gentle readers of issue 52, God & I save that judgment for the DJs at local KFRG who succeeded in forcing me from the closest laundromat with their Nuremberg defense of country radio; "I'm just doing my job, bringing you the country hits you ask for".

3. I've felt bad for Cat Power ever since a mid-'90s review of one of her live shows in the New York Times which called her hopeless and pathetic without using those actual words. But I have to wonder. How *does* one go about being the meekest, least confident performer in modern America and still break the bank at one of the best endowed college systems in California as—so goes the rumor mill—she did that night in Claremont?



The models flit around Berlin, attention deficits ordered into an agenda, pursuit of the party. I take "party" to mean, like, an event

where you go to someone's apartment and stand around in the kitchen, but no—here the ante is higher, the party has a coat-check, people in white gloves and umpire outfits are doing synchronized dance moves, there is a semi-professional light show. The bathroom here is in and of itself a party, a cavernous, roomy labyrinth of couches and stalls, the whole thing one big unisex trough of cocaine, hairspray, mirrors, make-up, posed contorted leaning on greasy, sweaty walls.

Earlier today, I went to a record store to try to purchase some German electronic music; the store had turntables and headphones and stacks of records to listen to, which all sounded

the exact same, all the same brainwashing beat, and now here it is again, tonight, at the party. The DJ matches up the BPM, fidgets through the motions, the kick-drum pattern never changes. I think I get it now: it's a form of hypnosis, of self-induced sleepwalking, a somnambular navigation of the night. Katrin produces "die Tüte" and we slouch around it, elbows crowded on other elbows crowded upon ours. The drinkers are herded up by the bar, not the best-looking people in the place—those people are in the bathroom, worrying about their hair or their weight, doing coke or throwing up, feeling each other up in the stalls—but still, pretty good looking all the same, these drunks, putting the lie to the Chicagoan notion that alcoholism and color coordination exist in an either/or relation to one another.

Out on the dance floor is pure pandemonium. Tom (male model) says that the last time he was here people were standing up on the bar by five a.m., fists pumping the air in unison. Really? I say. To the paralyzingly hypnotic brainwashing beat? Yeah, he says, pumps his fist in the air, demonstrates: boom, boom, boom, boom. I can't imagine. It seems so lulling, the hypno-rhythm of this—uh, what do you call this? What is this, specifically? I ask. People can't answer. They shrug their shoulders and keep dancing, content without categorizations, moving in mechanical unison to the simple synthetic sound, the pound, pound, pound you can easily catch on and zone out into repetitive motion bliss to. You could amplify a churning 5090 Xerox machine and they'd dig it. This reminds me of working at the xerox store, actually, and the meditative trance-zone you'd get into, collating affidavits as the big monster cancer machines churned out electronic music behind you. Whacked out on the night shift manager's weed, it was the music of the spheres, the fata morgana, the siren's song. I tape recorded it once, to take it home and sample it, but lost the tape, left it around somewhere. I can only hope that somebody found it and is listening to it today, booming out of a low-rider system with ground FX, cruising some eastern European or southern Himalayan downtown strip, the boom, boom, boom of the 5090 copier rattling neighborhood windows as the driver nods his head, one hand on the wheel and the other in his lap, cutting a line of coke on a CD case.

Die Tüte has flipped my lid. This scene is freaking me out and I decide to hang out in the bathroom lounge for a while. Seated on a couch, I watch beautiful bovine Germans saunter in and out of the stalls, dressed to impress, and try to imagine what it would be like to interact with these bell-bottomed behemoths, clearly all well-fed as children—one imagines them drinking milk squirted straight from a cow's udder into mouth, one imagines 10 pound bags of potatoes boiled, buttered and devoured in one sitting by these stunning super-humans, kids who didn't chip a nail as they ripped the Wall down with their bare hands so they could do coke and party on the rubble. Hypnotic beats, bovine growth hormone, a science-fictional fashion sense based on childhood extrapolations and the anything-goes aesthetic of children raised

in rubble: the people in the bathroom are knock-outs, truly stunning human specimens. I have no chance, and that's OK with me. Even the thought of it fills me with dread. Relations! Adult, physical, intimate! Isn't that exactly the sort of behavior which the droning repetition of amplified appliances should quell? No, no—it's a hive, vampirically alive, don't make eyes or they'll be staring at your neck all night. Boom, boom, boom.

I've metabolized and am ready to kick it on the dance floor. As was the case with Randy Higgins (sic), the junior high school bully who tormented me for a full year with his supposed expert karate status, only to get whupped by me on the last day of sixth grade because I had overestimated his fighting skill so greatly (I hope he doesn't read *Punk Planet*, as he is reputedly a marine and specializes in torture and gizzard removal now, so I don't really need him remembering old vows of retribution made towards class-mates at the Carolina Friends School), my stepping up to the dance floor is quickly followed by the realization that, just as Randy had the actual black belt but was not, per se, a black belt himself, these Berliners are way more about killer outfits than killer moves. Most of them sway back and forth gingerly, apparently concerned about ruffling their ornate and towering hairdos—only a few people in here seem possessed by real, unadulterated revelry, appear to be actually *partying*, exploding with a pure and unselfconsciously expressed joy. These people have the psychic spotlight on them, they glow with an unearthly energy and perfection, their bodies luminescent and veins pumping blood unobstructedly through perfect, unbroken hearts.

My own spazzardry is met with reprimands from the models. Katrin sidles up next to me to deflate my self-assuredness. "You look like an idiot," she laughs. "Thanks, dude," I smile. I have no comeback, since all her moves are ironic. The models don't like anything. They take me to dance clubs and apologize for every one they take me to. *This place was great last week*, they lament, *I don't know what happened*. They stare sullenly at the floor as people swing from chandeliers and champagne cannons douse the assemblage.

"You shake your head around like you're a metal-head," Katrin chides me. "I am a metal head," I say. Boom, boom, boom. That pulverizingly monotonous bass drum. I much prefer the less assertive beats of—what is it called? "Katrin, do you know about this music?" I ask. She shrugs. "I prefer elektro," she says. Ah, yes, elektro, what the hell is that, it's good when I hear it, but what the hell is it, who is it, where is it, I know there must be some good shit going on in Berlin, only what, who, where, how—perhaps, it occurs to me, it's better not to know, perhaps it's better to just let my imagination of what it might be exist uncontaminated by the eternally disappointing confines of the real, of what's actually available. Maybe better that my conception of electronica should remain an abstracted ideal, in much the same way that East Germans' imaginary cold war conception of what was on the other side of the Wall, the fantasy construct of western capitalist couture and all its endless possibility, allowed them to not actually end up conforming to what I'd conceive of as

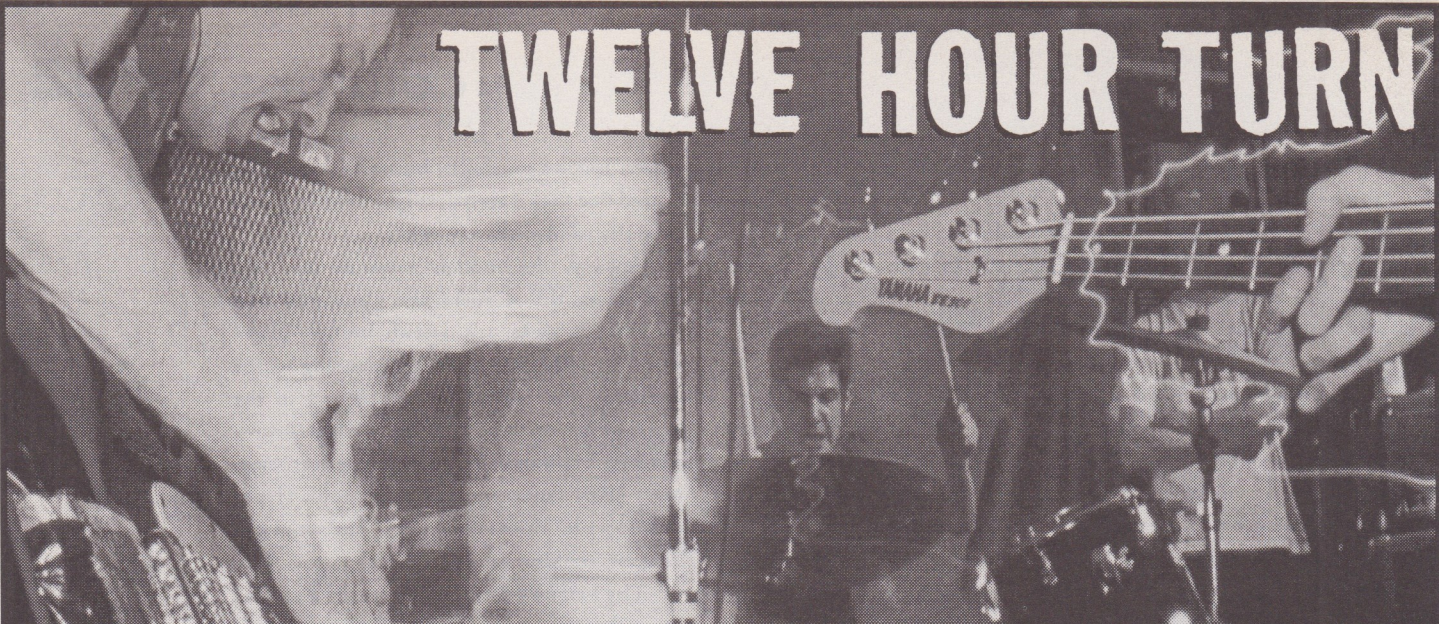
western fashion sensibility but rather somehow insured that they'd arrive tonight in white gloves and puffy padded umpire vests.

Anyway, the models reassure me, this music sucks, this all sucks, this place is the best place and it sucks, it's overwhelmingly mundane, from the fake alienated dancing to the woman in the corner looking bored to the point of catatonia, holding a rhinestone-sequined bag which, in glittering letters, says, "wild." How fantastic. How super cool. Hyper cool. I love it. To the coat check! And we're out the door, walking back to the car.

The brightly-lit, silent street is a revelatory, sobering juxtaposition. No one outside at four a.m., walking along, Unter den Linden. We walk around the block, strolling in the late-December night, an unseasonably warm night for the time of year in this city, but cold nonetheless. The wide, elegant streets are starkly lit by glaring white street lights, and there is no sound, suddenly, save the clomp, clomp, clomp of our footsteps echoing rhythmically off the walls.

We pass the American embassy in silence, two blocks from the abandoned warehouse which now houses the makeshift dance club. The street is blocked off by barricades and an armored military vehicle sits parked in front, as well as a police truck, the peering eyes of the cops in the truck the only sign of life around. The embassy stands intact, holding on to its tiny tract of North Atlantic Treaty, the embassy to the other world, waiting for the suicide bomber but hearing only the distant rapport of the bass kicking two blocks down the street. Boom, boom, boom. Here is the war, two blocks away. Every embassy in every country is barricaded like this now, because it's a war with the whole world, and the enemy could be anywhere, plastique in shoes, walking in. Here it is, and you're either with us or against us, as George W. said, "the time for an anti-American left is over," as *the Nation* magazine put it, "Wir sind alle Amerikaner," ("We are all Americans,") as German Chancellor Schroeder told his people, the Germans. And as for me, "Ich bin ein Berliner," in the words of JFK, or, expressed more accurately in the words of Drive Like Jehu: "Sometimes I'm a Hamburger. Sometimes I dream of it." ©

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Remembering the Millennium

by Mark Brown

I remember the Millennium. On television it all looked spectacular—fireworks and streamers and everyone dancing and hugging all over the world, covered in light, happy breaths hanging around them in clouds. Watching, it felt like maybe, just maybe, this year out of all the other years, something might change. We all hoped, from our stomachs upward, a great grasping yearning, that this would be the turning point, the end of the century, the start of the future, a new beginning . . . A tiny, flickering spark of belief that the next century would be better.

We shouldn't have been surprised that out here the year 2000 never happened. There wasn't an electric moment of realization, an ecstatic flash of insight, but a tiny, nagging feeling that somewhere, somehow, in some way, we'd all been cheated. Something should have happened—a little bit of magic somewhere, some miracle or other to mark the end of an era—but nothing special did. Looking into his eyes, lined and red-rimmed, and telling him, no matter what had happened, the future was here now so the past didn't matter, how could you not feel cheated the next day, when everything was the same?

That was my parents, that. They'd split up, my Mam had moved out, got herself a little flat, met a few blokes, started going down to the Bigg Market drinking again. My Dad just sat in the house looking into space, smoking tab after tab, the curtains drawn, fag ash like tiny stars on the

carpet. He'd had himself a woman on the side once too, years back.

I was about 12. I remember being sat upstairs playing on the Spectrum when my Dad came in from work. Instead of going into the living room and turning on the telly, like he usually did, he went straight into the kitchen and made my Mam a cup of coffee, then came upstairs. I didn't look round as he came through the bedroom door, but cigarette smoke filled the room as he sighed and cleared his throat. He stepped up behind me and rubbed the top of my head, like he used to when I was little, and said I should go down and sit with my Mam. I paused the game and turned round to look at him and he was just stood there, arms hanging at his sides, coat still on. He looked so anxious and shifty—like a kid who'd just broken a vase—that I really wanted to laugh. I remember him looking down at me, his mouth a thin line underneath his moustache, forehead like old tree bark, knotted and lined, and saying he was going to put a bet on. I said right.

He didn't come back for three months.

It was snowing when he did, the sky purple, the lines of things soft with snow. I remember vividly the tiny plastic tree overloaded with all of the decorations and tinsel that would have usually fitted on the big, proper tree that my Dad would bring home on the 12th. I can still see the cheap card sat on the sideboard with the words "to Tony, Merry Christmas, Dad and Sandra" written in it in a handwriting that wasn't my Dads.

My Mam sat there, lips pinched around her cigarette, padded slippers in the shape of pig's faces on the end of her black tighted legs, eyes fixed on the telly as my Dad banged at the door. As soon as he started I got up out of my chair to go and let him in, but my Mam stopped me.

"You just stay where you fuckin' are. He can bloody freeze out there for all I care." A cold in her voice almost knocked me back into my chair. We hadn't really talked about my Dad going. It had always been me and her anyway. At least she talked to me, not like my Dad—he just sat there, eating his tea and smoking his tabs. It didn't really seem a problem to me to admit to myself that I didn't really miss him. Still though, I felt bad sat down in our living room with my Dad shouting through the letterbox and my Mam lighting tab after tab. Deep down I had a sense that maybe this wasn't how it was meant to be, that somehow this didn't tally with families I saw on telly, or read about at school.

We sat through an entire episode of *Eastenders*, tight lipped in silence, as my Dad pleaded and pleaded to be let in, hollering through the black draft excluders, pausing occasionally to shout back at a passer-by or to tell a neighbour to fuck off and mind their own business.

Eventually my mother relented with a great snort, and opened the door. The vodka bottle clinked as my dad half dropped it onto the coffee table, before weaving his way across the small room to

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the chair he always sat in, flopping into it with a great expulsion of breath.

"Hallow Da."

"Hallow Son." A fumble in his crumpled shirt pocket produced a grubby five-pound note, offered to me with his dirty, chipped nails, two fingers faint nicotine brown. "Me an' your Mam have to talk. So," a nod towards the door, "take yersel' out for a bit, aye?"

I nodded back and went to get my coat just as my Mam came back in with two glasses of different sizes. One said Majorca, the other Benidorm. I used to find it funny that none of us had ever been out of the country, yet the house was full of souvenir ashtrays and donkeys and dancing Spanish ladies.

The last thing I saw as I walked the tiny distance from the bottom of the stairs where my coat was hanging up, to the front door directly in front of it, was a glimpse of my mother, feet up on the chair, legs crossed and pulled into her chest in front of her like a shield. Even though she always seemed very old to me, suddenly, for no reason, she looked very young, like photos I'd seen of her from before I was born.

Outside the snow was fresh and the streets empty—even the police sirens were dampened by the thick white blanket. Not knowing what else to do I made a snowball, scraping snow from a car bonnet, and threw it at an orange streetlamp. The sky was a light purple flecked with snow that seemed to swirl around the windows and lights. I remember standing there, the snow landing on my face and hair, little drops of water running down the back of my neck, rubbing the fiver together inside my pocket. I don't think that I was thinking anything.

The way I see it, looking back, the

streets were completely empty of people and cars, although I'm sure that can't have been true. It felt kind of magical, just being totally alone as I walked through somewhere that was usually full of people, like I was the last person in the world. Without thinking about it I came up to the shopping centre—a two level development built in the '60s, shops at ground level and shops on top of those with a balcony that you reached with a ramp—and even this seemed different that night. Two men were arguing in front of the Chinese, framed in the light coming from inside. A group of kids a couple of years older than me were standing up on the balcony, sheltering underneath the canopy which covered it. Some of them were passing around cans and blowing smoke rings; two were kissing, the boy with his hands down the back of the girls leggings. As I passed the off-license, the door made a *whew-wa* sound as somebody came out. Briefly I thought about spending my dad's money, but it didn't seem right.

I kept walking further into the estate, further into empty streets. Crunching through the snow, I felt like a ghost floating through some half-finished sketch. The world looked softer somehow with all of its detail erased. Despite the fact it was freezing, the cold air nipping at my face and fingers, the estate seemed warmer, more welcoming. It was like the snow had taken away all of the rough edges, made the world softer. It almost looked pretty.

I walked for hours that night. When I got back I went straight to bed without turning the lights on, meticulously folding my tracksuit in the dark, as the headboard of what was now my parents' bed again banged against the wall.

After that, the years went by for my parents. My dad lost his job, my Mam got one. My Dad started going out and drinking because he didn't have a job, my Mam because she did. They would knock seven bells out of each other, pissed out of their heads, screaming at each other, then go to bed together. I kept out of the way, until I was old enough to get out. Things continued as they always had until my Mam finally moved out.

On the Millennium night, totally by accident, my parents ended up at the same party and decided to get back together. Telling me about it later, my Mam said that my Dad came over to her just as the countdown to the new century began, grabbing her and shouting "let's do this the way it was meant to be, pet, you an' me," before clamping his lips over hers just as Big Ben started to chime. He said "start of a century babe, what say we give it another go?" He was so romantic, she said, that she couldn't refuse and they danced together to The Pogues, then went home to the old house, arm in arm down the empty streets, my dad singing and knocking over dustbins all the way.

"So Merry Christmas . . . I love you baby . . . I see a better day, when all our dreams come true..."

Within a week nothing was different, everything was how it had always been. ☺

Mark Brown was born in Newcastle upon Tyne, an ex-industrial city in the north east of England, but drifted gradually southward, eventually ending up in London. His favourite lyric ever is "Just because you're better than me doesn't mean I'm lazy, just because I dress like this doesn't mean I'm a communist". He can be reached at markbrown78@hotmail.com.

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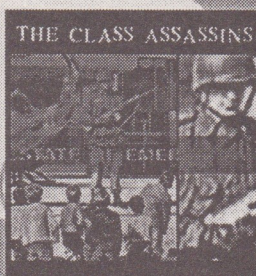
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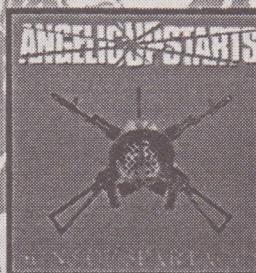


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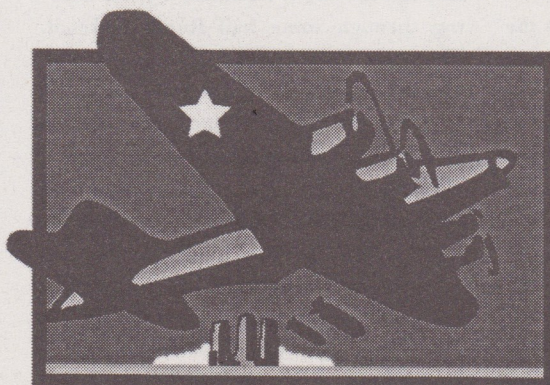
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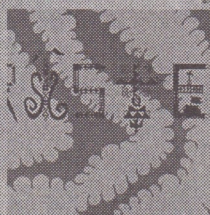
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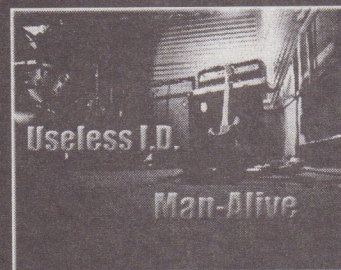
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Make a Quick Quilt

By Searah Deysach

So, have you ever bought a bunch of fabric 'cause you thought it was cool, only to get home and realize you had no idea what to make with it? Or maybe you have a friend who has done something really, really nice for you and you have no idea what to get them, but you want to make them something 'cause he/she is so great? Or, maybe you are looking for a way to preserve all your old punk rock T-shirts from 1987, but can't fit into them anymore? Well, you know what? I think you need to make a quilt!

And hey boys, don't turn the page just because I said *quilt*. I know sewing is traditionally "woman's work" but that doesn't mean you're any less of a man if you sew. Does a chick working on car make her any less of a woman? Of course not. It just makes her hotter. Yum!

Anyway, I'm going to show you how to make a quick and easy quilt. Once you have all your materials gathered, you should be able to make this in a few hours.

You'll need

- **Access to a sewing machine.** You can sew this by hand, but it will take a lot longer.
- **Thread.** The standard is to have thread that matches your chosen fabric, but I don't have time for that shit.
- **Yarn & a big needle that the yarn will fit through.**
- **Quilt Batting.** You can get this at any fabric store. Make sure you don't get the crib sized one unless you want a tiny quilt.
- **Fabric.** This can be whatever you want. How much you have will determine how big a quilt you get. If you want a nice sized quilt for a twin-sized bed or that is great for the couch or your favorite chair, you want at least two yards. Now remember: you need two different fabrics, one for the top of the quilt, one for the bottom, so actually you need about 4 yards. This is a great way to use fabric that you think is super cute/sexy/funny/furry, but you could never wear on your body because you just aren't that kind of person. I have a fabulous pink fake fur and purple satin quilt that I made and it makes me feel like a drag queen every time I wrap myself up in it. So go ahead and get that fluffy purple polka-dot stuff you've had your eye on, it will make a wonderful quilt.

Putting it together

OK, we are going to assume that you are just making a quilt with one kind of fabric on the top and another kind on the bottom. You can of course make this more complicated by piecing together more than one fabric for the top layer (or sewing togeth-

er all those old shirts I talked about earlier) but I'm not going to go into that now. You can also embellish the top of the quilt with embroidery, appliqué or puffy fabric paint and you should do that before you start putting this all together.

- First, make sure your bottom piece of fabric and your top piece of fabric are the same size. Then lay the bottom piece down (probably on the floor unless you are blessed with a huge table) with the right side *up*. Then place the top piece of fabric on top of that with the right side *down*. Some fabrics don't have a right and wrong side, so if it isn't obvious, don't fret it (if you can't tell the difference, no one else will). Printed and furry fabric will be *real* obvious. On top of that, lay your quilt batting down. Pin the quilt batting to the two pieces of fabric and trim it so that the batting and all the fabric is the same size.

- Now it is time to sew (already, you say? See I told you this was easy!). Sew around the two long sides of the quilt and **one** of the shorter sides, leaving the other short side open. You'll want to use a straight stitch—this isn't the time for fancy zigzag. Also, make sure you have left about 1/2" seam allowance. Once you have three sides sewn up, reach up in-between the top and bottom fabric layers and turn the quilt inside (actually right-side) out. Now the batting should be in between the top and bottom fabrics.

You are gonna want to sew up the fourth side now. You can either do this carefully with the sewing machine or by hand. Try and turn the edges in as you sew, so that it looks like the other three sides. I would give the quilt a quick ironing at this point to get the edges nice and flat and make sure the fabric is smoothed out.

- To keep the batting from shifting around over time, you have to *tie* the quilt. To do this, take your yarn and thread it through a thick needle (called a darning needle). If your quilt is one plain color you may want to get a contrasting color (or colors) of yarn to tie it with. Take your needle and starting from the top of the quilt, insert the needle through the bottom and then make a very small stitch and bring it up through the top. Now tie a double knot and cut off the yarn so it has about 1/3" or so left. Repeat this all over the quilt top in any pattern you want (I usually choose a totally random pattern, but you can make your knots in the shape of smiley face, Misfits logo, or even a vulva). There is no right number of knots, you just want to make sure that you have enough to secure the quilt together.

Now you are the proud owner of a handmade 100% genuine punk rock quilt. Your granny would be so proud! ☺

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

"Everything that lives eats." So said Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in *The Physiology of Taste*. First published in 1825, Brillat-Savarin's book is a meditation on gastronomy, the science of good eating. In creating the forgotten tenth muse, named Gasterea, Brillat-Savarin wrote "The delights of taste are her domain. The whole world would be hers if she wished to claim it; for the world is nothing without life, and all that lives, eats."

Food is a universal link—a connection to any culture. Though each culture has its own distinctive traditions and food habits, food itself is identifiable cross-culturally. With taste as a guide, the process of preparing food is nearly ritualistic and as important as the final product. The cook is an alchemist, the kitchen his or her workshop for creating new combinations of taste.

As the first column about DIY Food, I tossed around the idea of providing a how-to construction of *croquembouche* or engineering the perfect *spätzle*, but decided to save them for later columns. Instead, I think it's important to begin this journey by examining food for what it is.

Food is a multi-dimensional subject. It is, among its other attributes, lavish, austere, emotional, learned, nostalgic, and political. Some take it for granted others savor its very essence. Food can be controlling—its power creates eating disorders and its powerlessness results in hunger. Food provides a lens to view other cultures. Societal food habits reveal cultural identities (it's true that we often are what we eat). Certain foods, like a favorite song, can evoke that bittersweet longing for the past. Food is business, a commodity. But for all of things food can be, ultimately it should be about *taste*.

I didn't learn about taste until I was 19. I grew up in the restaurant business and food was about putting the plate on the table in a proven, successful formula. Experimenting was not an option (other than my sister and I making mini pizzas out of crackers, red sauce and mozzarella in the microwave). My grandfather had learned the business from his parents. The food certainly tasted good, but it was less about the *food* and more about the *business*. Our meals were spent eating fine tasting, standard Italian American food while talking about the *size* of the lasagna! It wasn't until I started working for a former dental hygienist turned gourmand that I learned cheese isn't really yellow or orange, but a whiter color or that black olives in the can are dyed with lye. She was brave, introducing goat cheese to a blue-collar town, but she took a chance and succeeded. She took me under her wing and taught me how to make soup stock from scratch and roast my own peppers. It's because of her initial teachings that I would now rather shop in a market than a clothes store any day.

While I learned about taste at 19, it wasn't until later that I learned that food is also politics. The global lack of food affects

over half the world population. Vegetarian eating is subsistence living for many countries due to the fact that one third of the world uses 80 percent of its resources, while two-thirds of the world manage on the remaining 20 percent. Some of the cultures existing on this 20 percent include Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East.

In Africa, the current food debate (besides the constant threat of starvation for much of the continent) is over genetically modified (GM) crops. Recent news reports mention the Zambian government's refusal to accept genetically modified corn to feed their starving people. Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa took a bold stand, stating, "I'm not prepared to accept that we should use our people as guinea pigs."

Mwanawasa's stand is a lonely one on the continent. In Kenya, crops are being genetically engineered to fight pests and viruses that generally wipe out their sweet potato crops. Genetically modified corn crops have been growing in South Africa since 1998. The argument for the production of GM foods is the crop yields could increase and feed larger populations. The main argument against GM foods is the danger involved in messing with Mother Nature, so to speak. Biological diversity is disrupted by technologically engineering crops and could create unforeseen side effects, like weeds resistant to herbicides.

The introduction of GM crops to Africa has roots in the United States. Laboratories across the US are financing international development by inviting scientists from other nations to learn the technique of scientifically engineering food. America is the largest producer of GM foods in the world and are often unaware that we're ingesting these foods. Current labeling acts may change this fact, but sometimes corn is so far removed from its source (like in high fructose corn syrup), its origin is often questionable.

America is responsible for many food-related revolutions; another issue related to the scientific engineering of food is the fast food industry. Our society is heavily influenced by corporate food, or fast food, which, we can all attest, has *nothing* to do with taste—Gasterea does not preside over these kitchens—and *everything* to do with convenience. We live in a fast world, living for the moment, needing everything "yesterday." The success of the fast food business hinges on our fast lifestyles. A McDonald's hamburger tastes the same in Tulsa or Tokyo, having nothing to do with taste or health and everything to do with science and business. Consider this the decline of the Western palate, which is quickly reaching worldwide proportions. The revolution of fast food has forever changed the world's eating habits, quickly introducing its unhealthy foreign food items into cultural diets. Obesity has risen along with the number of

EATS, LIVES

by stacy gengo

fast food joints opening around the globe.

Recently, the main fast food chains have tried to become more aware of nutritional content in their food. McDonalds just announced the introduction of a new variety of vegetable oil, aimed at lowering the amount of saturated fat and trans fatty acids in its fried foods. I'm no scientist, but do question the engineering of this type of oil. This is a company that once used beef tallow to fry those fries, now everything is constructed within a laboratory.

Fast food by definition encompasses more than just the drive-through establishments and has come to include higher end chain restaurants, as well. Don't let table service and linen napkins fool you. Restaurants, like Applebee's and the Olive Garden, are big business, using their own form of industrial cuisine. The lettuce in a salad from one of those restaurants could have been shipped from the main processing plant; miles from the restaurant's location and overlooking any local produce options. (For more about fast food, I have to recommend Eric Schlosser's book, *Fast Food Nation* for an in-depth and eye-opening look at the fast food business.)

Some have chosen to fight back. Italian journalist, Carlo Petrini, in protest to the addition of a McDonalds in Rome, created the Slow Food Movement in 1986. Foreseeing the danger of fast food to his culture, Slow Food attempts to bring folks back to the table and not to the counters of the fast food revolution sweeping the globe. The introduction of fast food to the world is quickly influencing younger generations away from their national cuisines and communal kitchen tables, instead giving them an unhealthy alternative to fresh locally produced food, offering instead industrial homogenized food. Taste is becoming a lost sense with cultural food habits dying along the way. As global corporate food companies streamline their production and create their own purveyors, while proliferating the world markets, little room is left for the independent restaurant.

Consequently, Slow Food (online at www.slowfood.com) has created The Ark of Taste, a compilation of small, independent food producers and products in danger of extinction. As an offshoot of the Ark, slow food established the Presidia which "provides economic support and media back-up" for the survival of these items.

This is Gasterea's domain. The motto here is "live simply so that others may live." The main tenets of this approach are health, environmental, sociological and ethically based choices for this way of life. With the globalization of cuisine, we should focus on our local options. Visit your local farmer's market, buy organic produce, try and choose an independent restaurant as your next eating option. The choices are many and—small scale as they may seem—do make a difference.

Almonds

I sat down to ponder what to write about with a sandwich in hand. The sandwich was a simple combination of almond butter and cherry preserves, and it started me thinking about the almond.

Almonds are the largest share of nuts traded in the world. California produces half of the world's crop, with Spain and Sicily following in production. Almonds are a historical nut with Biblical references and reputed to have originated in North Africa and Asia, thriving in Mediterranean-like climates.

The almond grows on trees in two varieties: sweet and bitter. We are most accustomed to the sweet variety, as the bitter is lethal when eaten raw (the toxicity of the bitter almond diminishes with heat application and is used as flavoring in liqueurs like Amaretto).

Almonds appear in many Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes, particularly as nuts are often protein sources instead of meats. In American/French-influenced cooking they're often served slivered with vegetables, chicken or fish—a *la almonidine* style (total wedding reception dinner). Ground almonds can be pressed to produce almond milk, which was mainly used during the Middle Ages for soup. Almonds are often used in baking and sweet delicacies, like nougatine and marzipan. They can also be ground into butter, like peanut butter, but milder tasting, and perfect when combined with cherries. There is *nothing* processed about those two tastes, purely almonds and cherries.

Holding this sandwich, like Proust with his madeleine and lime blossom tea, I was transported to an earlier time. A very good friend served me this sandwich once, though the taste combination is inimitable and just plain delicious—it was more about the gesture in offering the sandwich—the moment in time captured by this particular food. Her kitchen, its smell, the time of year, the activity, the circumstances of her hosting, the conversation—all contributing to the memory produced by this sandwich and its flavor.

This is essence of the Slow Food Movement, bringing food back to the table to be enjoyed and savored. Cooking doesn't have to be complicated. By using the freshest ingredients, memorable meals can be created from simple ingredients, like this sandwich. The providing of food and sharing of a meal are, for me, the most sincere forms of kindness. There is nothing quite like sharing food with friends. So, to you readers, welcome, here's to many more meals together. ©

Helen's sandwich.

- Lightly toast thick slices from a nice loaf of bread (my favorite is a whole grain variety).
- Spread each slice with almond butter and cherry preserves.
- Lay slices together, cut in half.
- Enjoy.

Want to talk food? Drop me a line: slynng@earthlink.net. See you next bi-month!

DIY sex EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Before I get to your questions, an astute reader pointed out something that I totally neglected to mention in my guide to pussy-eating column in issue #49 and I want to remedy that now. I, for some unknown reason, totally forget to talk about safer oral sex. As I am sure all my smart readers know, **sexually transmitted diseases can be contracted during oral sex (mouth/vagina, mouth/penis and mouth/anus)**. If you are not 100% sure that the person you are going down on is disease free (and we're not just talking about HIV here, there is all kinds of stuff you can get like herpes, gonorrhea etc . . .) you should always use a barrier of some sort. Here is a handy guide to what to use when.

Blowjobs: Use a condom. Yes, many of them taste icky and if there is Nonoxynol-9 on the condom, it will numb your mouth. Good news is they make some pretty tasty flavored condoms these days. You can get everything from mint (for a refreshing BJ) to chocolate or banana (wonder where they got the idea for that flavor?). If you can't find flavored condoms, you can use an unlubbed condom and add flavored lube if you like. Hell, you can even cover a condom with honey or whipped cream and give dessert a whole new meaning!

Cunnilingus: You have a few more options with giving head to the ladies. There are a couple of different dams on the market that are made specifically for the purpose of going down on girls. These thin latex sheets are stretched over the vulva. Put a drop of lube on the side that goes against the licensee and if you want to put a bit of something tasty on your side, go right ahead. You can also cut a condom or latex glove open and use that as a damn. Saran wrap also makes a fabulous dental dam and you can make it any size you want (just make sure it covers the whole area of the vulva). There is still some question as to whether or not *microwavable* plastic wrap is an effective barrier, so avoid it if you can. With any of these methods, you have to be careful to not have too much lube or gunk on your hands. The whole effectiveness of a dam relies on the lick not letting go of it. And, yes, it can be awkward at first to use dams, but hey, a little awkwardness can save you a lot of irritation later (after all, there is nothing less sexy than a big ol' herpes sore on your mouth).

Analingus: If you are going to be licking someone's butt, you can and should follow the same guidelines as for cunnilingus. Barriers are great for anal/oral sex especially if you are a little squeamish about actually *tasting* his or her butt. And if you want to stick your tongue actually in someone's butthole, you *always* want a barrier of some sort. There is plenty o' bacteria in our anuses that you *don't* want in your mouth.

That said, I know most people don't use barriers when having oral sex. But I urge you to consider it, especially if you don't know the

person all that well. It may be a little awkward to bring it up and maybe the person you are about to go down on isn't all that keen on it (if you blindfold and tie them up, they can't really protest), but you can get some nasty stuff from sucking on someone's dick or burying your face in someone's pussy and in the relative scheme of things, it makes sense to take precautions.

Dear Sex Lady,

This is gonna probably sound like a really stupid question, but I need advice from someone. I'm young—16 in fact—but I feel like I've found THE ONE. I have found the girl of my dreams. We're really good friends, but we love each other very much. Her parents won't let her date and we both respect that so we're gonna wait to start a real relationship. But the problem is she's always asking me, "What do you see in me that you don't see in other girls? What makes ME so special? I guess I don't see it." I don't know how to respond to something like that, so I just tell her that she's amazing, beautiful, and she has a great personality—but I guess that's not good enough for her and I don't know what else to tell her. What can I tell her to make her stop asking these questions and just accept the fact that she's the best thing that's ever happened to me? I just want her to feel better about herself, and I know she doesn't want to end this whole thing!

Signed,
Young Love

First of all, you have to realize that this problem isn't about you. She obviously has low self-esteem and doesn't know why anyone would like her. I was there myself when I was 16. My high school boyfriend was an adoring, loving guy who told me all the time how beautiful and wonderful I was. I never believed him, or at least never let myself believe him. I felt ugly and stupid and didn't want anyone to tell me otherwise and ruin my vision of myself. It took me eight years of therapy to learn how to feel truly loveable. Now I don't understand how anyone could *not* love my wonderful, fabulous self!

Um . . . anyway—low self-esteem is an all too common ailment among teenagers. Most people just grow out of it, but sadly some never do and find it impossible to have healthy relationships as adults because they are always down on themselves. Hopefully, your girlfriend will grow out of this soon, but the sad fact is that there is really nothing you can say to make her feel better about herself.

That is not to say that you should *stop* telling her how fab she is. I don't think it is ever wrong to tell someone that they rock. But I do think that you should sit down and have a talk with her and tell her how it makes you feel when she questions your judgement.

Here you are being honest and loving towards her and she is essentially dismissing your feelings.

OK, I know I *always* say you should sit down and have a talk with him/her, but honesty and communication are really the only things that make relationships work and last. You may also want to suggest that she find someone to talk to, a counselor or something, someone who can help her find out why she is so down on herself.

Young Love, the bottom line is this, love her, be good to her and hopefully, eventually she will see in herself all the great things that you do. Until then hang in there and good luck!

Dear Sex Lady,

I was wondering if it is normal to have a loose stool and bowels after anal penetration, sometimes for a couple of days. I use a bunch of lube whenever I get involved and have wondered if that causes it. Also I usually have to forego for at least a week between actual penetrations—is that typical? I have a friend that says every other day is achievable—Hard to believe.

*Thanks,
New-man*

Well, I did some casual research among the more serious ass-fucking friends of mine and they all pretty much said that while loose stools aren't necessarily common after anal sex, it is not abnormal.

You should take a look at what kind of lube you are using and how much of it. First off, avoid oil-based lubes. Some anal enthusiasts may recommend them, but in addition to making a mess of your sheets, they will stay in your body longer than water-based lubes. They can, essentially, keep your rectum lubed up for a while and that may contribute to your problem. Also, how thick of a lube are you using? You should be using a thicker lube, like Slippery Stuff Gel or ForPlay Deluxe. Thicker lubes stay where you put them and cushion the blow (pardon the pun) better than thinner lubes. If your lube is too liquidy, you may find that you have to use a lot more to get that extra little cushion. Lube is wonderful and I advocate the use of it with almost any sex act, but maybe you are just using way too much. Also, while you are getting plowed, some air is probably getting pushed into your ass. This too may add to your looseness. So maybe try a new lube and use as much as you need, but don't go hog wild with it.

Now, you didn't say why you have to forego a week in-between "actual penetrations", but I can assure you that lots of people take it up the ass quite often. If you are forgoing because of your stool

issue, well, then try my suggestions above and hopefully that will help. But if you are forgoing because of pain, that is a different story. Lots and lots of people have anal sex and lots and lots of people rush into taking a big ol' dick or dildo up their ass without working up to it and that can really smart. If your anus is sore after anal sex, try scaling down the size of the object you are ramming up there. Get a smaller butt plug or dildo, or if you are taking a dick up there, maybe try just his fingers for a while, ease your way into the whole shebang. Anal sex really shouldn't be painful. It should be fun-ful!

For more information on all things anal, check out Tristan Taormino's great website at puckerup.com. ©

Got questions? E-mail me at diysex@punkplanet.com. Live in or plan on visiting Chicago? Swing by my shop, Early to Bed, at 5232 N. Sheridan. Just want to buy some kick-ass sex toys? Shop online at www.early2bed.com. Thanks!

DIY health

IN SICKNESS & NO WEALTH

by angel page

Ginkgo Biloba is such a unique and beneficial plant, I feel it needs to have its qualities showcased in this column. I've even received two emails in the past requesting that I write about this tree and its medicinal qualities, so let's get going!

I'd like to start off with a little history: According to *Home Remedies A-Z* by Tanja Hirschsteiner, "Over 200 million years ago, numerous members of the ginkgo family thrived in all parts of the world. All but one of these species disappeared as other deciduous trees and firs took over their habitat. The Ginkgo Biloba tree is the only survivor, a kind of living fossil that can still be found growing virtually unchanged in small parts of Eastern Asia."

Once thought to be extinct, Engelbert Kaempfer discovered the Ginkgo Biloba tree in China in 1691. The Ginkgos had survived and were mainly found in monasteries in the mountains where Buddhist monks cultivated the tree from about 1100 AD for its many good qualities. It may be the oldest living seed plant and is therefore by some seen as one of the wonders of the world. Individual trees may live longer than 3,000 years. They're so hardy that, according to *Dr. Rosenfeld's Guide to Alternative Medicine*, "the only life surviving at ground zero after the atomic blast in Hiroshima was a single Ginkgo Tree."

Ginkgo is derived from the Japanese word *ginkyo*, meaning, "silver apricot" which refers to the nut/fruit of the plant, which is eaten in Japan. (On a side note: My immature cohorts and I used to crush up the Ginkgo Biloba nuts (produced by the female tree only) in botany lab and sprinkle the crushed nuts under our classmates chairs. The smell is absolutely atrocious—a great little harmless prank, at least until it happens to you!)

What it helps

Ginkgo maintains adequate metabolic function of the brain, which in turn improves concentration and memory and may be capable of slowing down the progress of Alzheimer's disease.

It is also a blood thinner which enhances circulation, thus facilitates the elimination of metabolic waste, increases oxygen supply to the heart, brain, and all other body parts, and relieves leg cramps.

It has also been found to increase penile blood flow. A study in December of 1991 found that Ginkgo Biloba extract increased penile blood flow in a group of patients who had not responded to traditional drug therapies. Half of the group regained potency within six months."

Ginkgo Biloba also helps to diminish the side effects of Tinnitus (the continuous ringing or buzzing in the ear). I am one of the many of thousands of people who suffer from Tinnitus, so, here I am on my soap box preaching to those of you who frequent shows and choose not to wear ear plugs! It is so important that you protect your hearing! The National Institute of Health indicates that as much as one-third of all hearing loss is associated with loud noises, and many researchers believe that more young people are losing their hearing today than in previous years. They also report that in most cases, this type of hearing loss could have been prevented. If you didn't protect yourself and are one of the many people who suffer from Tinnitus, you can diminish the noise by using Ginkgo Biloba.

How to take it

You can take Ginkgo Biloba as a tea, capsules/tablets or liquid extract (you can get this with or without alcohol). You can find it at virtually all pharmacies and most definitely at your local health stores. The parts used are the leaves and should be taken for two weeks for best results. Doses of 40 milligrams per day have been shown to be safe and effective. The active ingredients are flavone glycosides, ginkgolides, and bilabolides, which all belong to a group of chemical compounds called Terpene lactones.

Allergic reactions to Ginkgo Biloba are very rare and mainly occur with the ingestion of the fruit/nuts. **Please note: Ginkgo can prolong bleeding time, so you should be wary of using it in combination with garlic, vitamin E, fish oil, aspirin, coumadin or drugs normally prescribed for peripheral arterial disease.** Also, it is very important to avoid Ginkgo Biloba when surgery is scheduled. Make sure to tell your doctor that you are taking this herb, so that s/he can determine when it is safe to perform any surgery. Also, check with your doctor if you have a heart condition or circulatory problems before using it.

And on a side note, if you have a heart condition, the herb alone will not take care of the whole disease by itself. You can help your body by not smoking, avoiding second hand smoke, controlling your weight, exercising, eating fruits, vegetables and grains, and controlling your blood pressure, diabetes, and blood cholesterol levels.

Good luck and good health to you all. ☺

I would love to hear feedback if this is the type of information you would like to read about, or if you would rather I stick to ailments? My new email address: diyhealth@yahoo.com

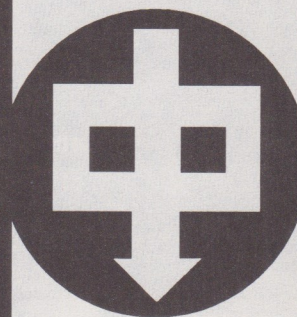
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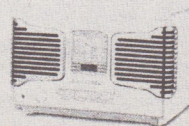
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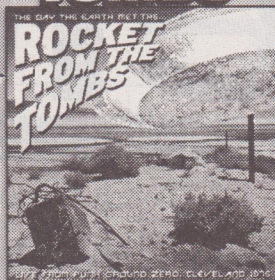


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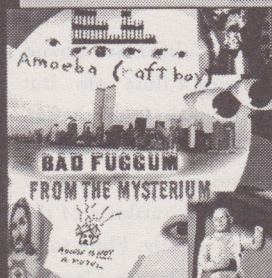
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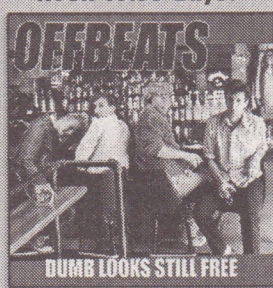


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ALSO HAPPENING IN ORANGE COUNTY

Long Beach Infoshop

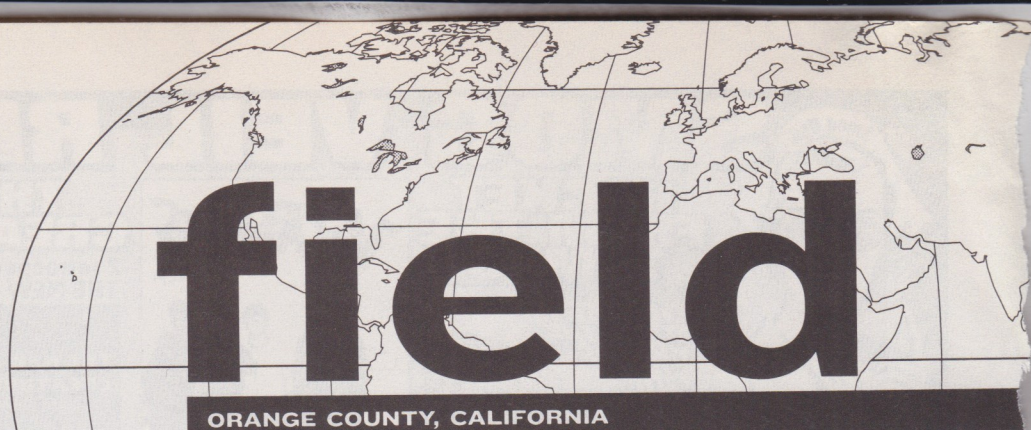
Who knew a community library could inspire such violence? Founded last year by a group of Long Beach activists, the Infoshop has a cornucopia of pamphlets detailing various social causes (from slavery reparations to ending the war in Afghanistan), books by Chomsky and Guevara, even a library of videotapes. It also hosts workshops, concerts featuring everything from hip-hop to punk shows, and serves as a meeting place and de facto nucleus of the Long Beach activist community. But the city has brutally cracked down on this tiny storefront in the middle of a

working-class neighborhood. The Infoshop has been raided by the LBC's finest at least five times in its short existence, faces a possible lawsuit by the city and is monitored around the clock by a camera situated on a signal light. Be a pal and help out the all-volunteer collective—and flip off that camera while you're at it. —Gustavo Arellano

Long Beach Infoshop: 684 Redondo Avenue, Long Beach, California, 90814. (562) 434-6934.

AAA Electra 99 Art Gallery, Museum and Performance Space

It says something about a venue when there are (admittedly lame) local punk bands too scared to play there. It says something else about an art gallery when it's not afraid to open up across the street from a city dump. And it says something about AAA Electra 99 masterminds Richard Johnson and Michelle Kim, who weathered a hurricane of city permitting issues to make the leap from hide-the-band-the-cops-are-here squatter venue to comfortably legal art-gallery-cum-show-space-cum-nexus-for-total-weirdness: simply put, AAA Electra 99 doesn't fuck around. You won't see any of the exercises in pretentiousness that you'll find hanging in your undergraduate buddies' apartments here; taxi driver Johnson and his similarly gritty friends crank out bizarre and unpredictable work that's a nice complement to musical regulars like the avant-Flipper art-



Punk, ¿Y Qué?

THE CHICANO PUNK MOVEMENT IN AMERICA'S MOST
CONSERVATIVE COUNTY BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

At a punk show at a sports bar in ultra-rich Newport Beach, California, a band called Cuauhtémoc is starting tonight's little revolution with a flute solo. But there's a schism in the sweaty crowd that cuts sharper—and speaks louder—than anything coming from the stage. Fifty or so Latino kids are front-and-center, clapping out a rhythm and matching singer (and flautist) Coyolt's intensity as bandanna-clad guitarist Ollin weaves in a vicious two-chord riff. But the people hovering at the outskirts of the Cuauhtémoc crew—almost three times as many, almost all white—stare silently. Flute solos are verboten at punk shows in this, the heart of suburbo-Republican Orange County, where even the supposed punk kids—actually, *especially* the supposed punk kids—are as conservative as they come.

"What the fuck is this shit?" a teenager asks his punk-chic friend. "Who do *those* people think they are, playing that?"

Maybe Coyolt hears him. After he gently puts his flute away, he grabs a mic, cradling it like a pistol. He takes a deep breath, and with singer Mexica, screams a staccato response, the opening stanza to a song called "Alerta, Alerta": "¡No somos Latinos! ¡No somos Hispanos! ¡Somos Mexicanos! ¡No somos Latinos! ¡No somos Hispanos! ¡Somos Chicanos! ¡Descendientes de la sangre indígena!"

The kids explode, boys as well as girls, shouting "¡Qué viva la revolución!" with left fists firmly in the air. The scoffers—some of whom sidle into the dancers with the intent of taking legal licks at Mexicans—are shocked, and after a few chord changes, they back off. They look a little scared.

What's happening here in Orange County is something that's been building momentum for centuries—forged in the swords of the conquistadors, tempered in the face of hemispherical mass subjugation, brought to fruition over the past decade in a county where speaking Spanish is sometimes a criminal offense. It's a reaction both to right-wing political attacks in what's typically and accurately characterized as America's most Republican county, and to the sell-out politics of their "liberal" elders; in many ways, it's an alternative to an alternative, an aligning of punk's diffuse fury with a very specific activist agenda, wrapped in the pedagogy of the oppressed.

Here in this cheap bar is one of the best examples of an activist punk scene in the country, born and bred completely and proudly independently—with their own bands, their own venues, their own support network, soon even their own record label and printing press—from decades worth of either local punk or politics.

Cuauhtémoc is just one of the bands in the Orange County Revolutionary Collective (OCRC), a group of about 40 activists and musicians who meet every Thursday in a nondescript office in even-more-nondescript Tustin to plan their political and musical activism. And to these kids—who really do get out in the streets and fight, who really do have the police on their back, who really do have something to say—

trip

it really is a shot at revolution.

"The music is activism and the activism is music," says Cuauhtémoc's drummer Reeve. "If we separate them, we'll die."

Maybe the Orange County Chicano punk scene isn't exactly punk when it comes to genre, but they've got perhaps the purest and most potent DIY tactics in Southern California. There's indigenous metalheads Tazumal, who concentrate most of their ire on the Catholic Church and the genocide of the Americas—and who hand out albums free of charge. There's Over the Counter Intelligence, a scruffier version of Rage Against the Machine who rail against the corporate malfeasance of Bush II America and throw 400-page tomes into the audience during performances. There's Cuauhtémoc, best described as a rap/punk/indigenous outfit, militants in the truest sense of the

word, with lyrics about the War on Activism and live shows frequently broken up by local cops. And there's more: some sing in English, others Spanish, a few even in Nahuatl—the language of the Aztecs. And most importantly, they're living the lives they sing about.

"Words that don't match deeds are worthless," explains Coyolt, as Cuauhtémoc and other activists paint signs for an upcoming protest against a corrupt Anaheim school board official.

Most of the OCRC members first met in a group involved in the Boycott Taco Bell campaign last summer. When they



CUAUHTÉMOC

began to work together, they realized most of them were musicians, and while playing very disparate styles, they each shared the philosophy of creating a revolutionary lifestyle through a combination of music and activism.

Few even knew about musical godparents like Los Crudos or participated in activism before the Taco Bell campaign. But maybe the isolation is what makes it work. Left alone to fight the problems affecting their communities, like INS raids, police brutality, and suffocating poverty, the bond between the bands and their community—as well as the intensity of their music—grows.

"For us, it's hard to draw lines between where the political ends and the music begins," says spoken-word artist Scott Keltic Knot, a member of the Cymru (Welsh) people. "Our struggle is like life, and life is difficult to compartmentalize. So we decided to try to start something here." ©

wreck Punk As a Doornail or high school heavy-metallers Tyrannis. It's the complete opposite of everything squeaky-clean Disneyland is supposed to stand for, even if it's just a freeway and a city dump away. —Chris Ziegler

AAA Electra 99 Art Gallery, Museum and Performance Space: 2821 White Star, Unit D, Anaheim, California, 92831. (714) 666-1805. www.aaa-electra99.com

SoapboXX Sessions

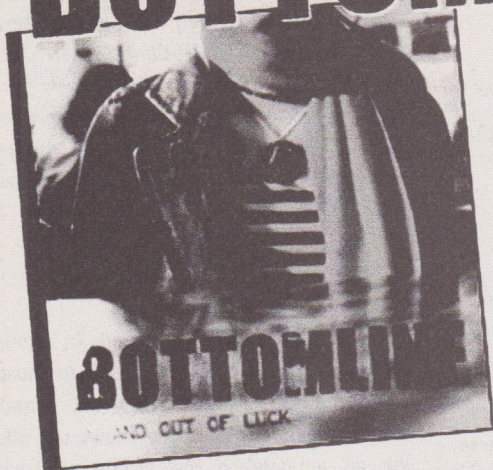
If there's a lot of meatheads in a music scene, it's tough for anyone else to muscle in—that's when the female-run, female-focused SoapboXX Sessions shows up, offering an antidote to the bro-heavy Orange County culture and providing a consistent incubator for some of the most challenging and fiercely independent musicians in the county. There's the regular "jam sessions"—novice-friendly tutorials designed to help women learn to play, build confidence and start bands of their own—that serve as the backbone of SoapboXX. But you'll also find workshops on DJing and guitar repair, movie nights, '80s dance parties, and—maybe the



best part—special SoapboXX Showcases (typically held at Garden Grove's Youth Drop-In Center, new home of the stalwart Koo's booking collective), where you'll see knock-you-on-your-ass-great bands that never seem to get shows anywhere else. —Chris Ziegler

SoapboXX Sessions: SoapboXX@webtv.com. SoapboXX Sessions generally take place at the Garden Grove Youth Drop-In Center, 12800 Garden Grove Blvd., Garden Grove, California, 92843, where the Koo's collective often organizes other independent DIY shows. Find more info about Koo's and SoapboXX at www.koos.org

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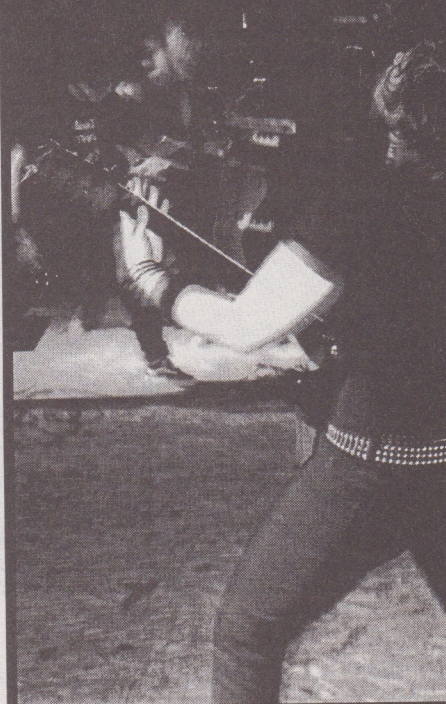
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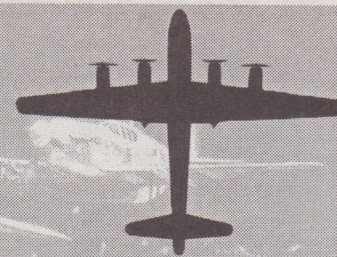
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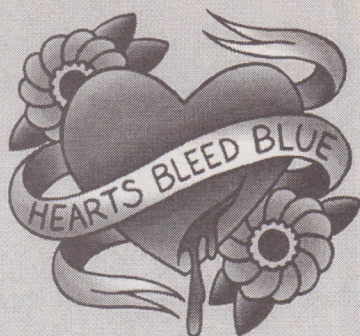
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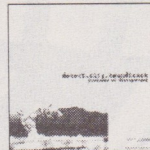
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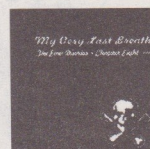
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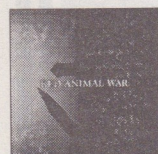
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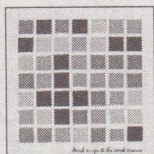
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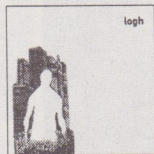
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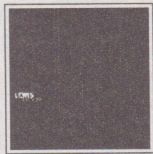
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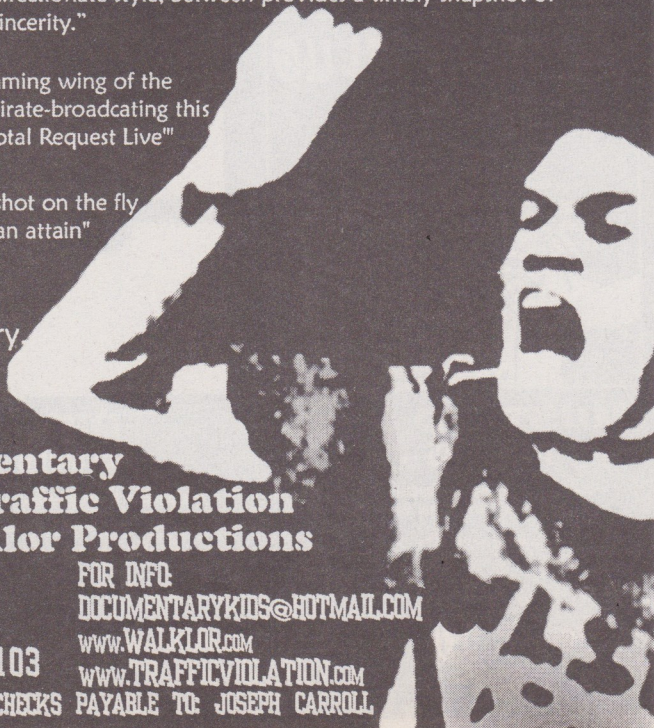
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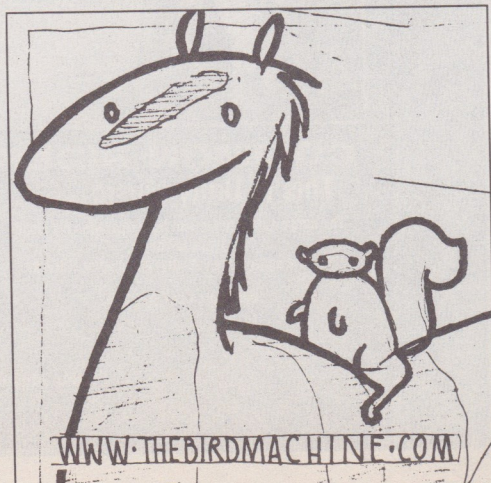


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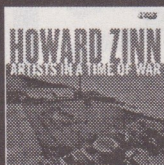


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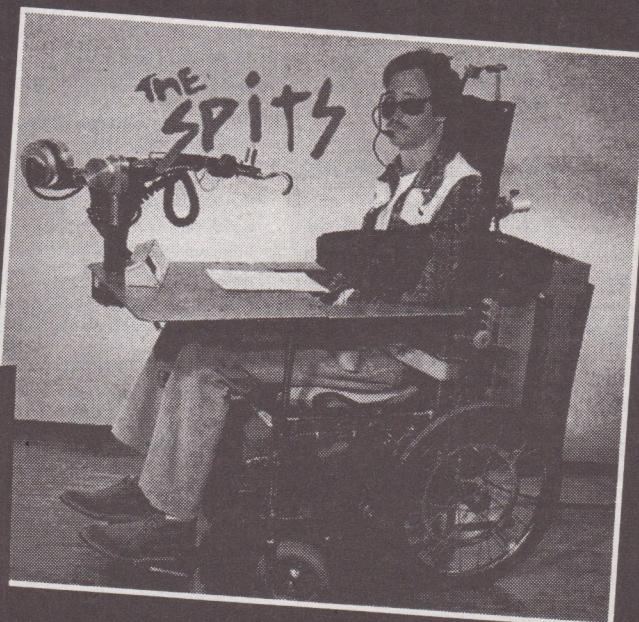


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THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Eric Action (EA), Brian Czarnek (BC), Art Ettinger (AE), Melissa Geils (MG), Jason Gitzlaff (JG), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Dana Morse (DM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Charlotte Robinson (CR), Kyle Ryan (KR), George Sanchez (GBS), Neal Shah (NS), Daniel Sinker (DS), Andy Slob (AS), Jillian Steinberger (JS), Annie Tomlin (AT)

ADZ – American Steel, CD

One of the many scuzz-rock bands (Antiseen, Hookers, Nashville Pussy, Limecell, Bulemics, etc.) that plays super dirty rock with metal influences. Hard, fast and loud with beer chasers. If you like your rock 'n' roll in a deep-fried southern way, then you will love this. (EA)
Steel Cage Records POB 29247 Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

Aftertaste – Two Minutes To A Heartbeat, CD

Debut full-length from South African hardcore outfit combining nonconformist and Christian messages. The down-tempo intros and bridges on several songs display a sense of melody sorely lacking from many other bands in this genre. (CR)
Angryson Records, 47 Douglas Ave., Mansfield, OH 44906, www.angrysonrecords.com

Agoraphobic Nosebleed – Frozen Corpse Stuffed With Dope, CD

Are you happy for homophobia? Swooning for sexism? Raving about racism? Do you like slickly produced, yet ultimately unappealing, grindcore featuring drum machines and speeding guitars? If the answer is yes, then today's your lucky day. Featuring the classics "Grandmother With AIDS," "Hungry Homeless Handjob," and "Shit Slit." (AT)
Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Aloha – Sugar, CD

A very percussive indie band that uses a xylophone and keyboards in an attempt to make their average, sad, laid-back sound original. It works on a few tracks, but they keep the same mood throughout. (TK)
Polyvinyl Record Co., POB 7140 Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Amazombies – Bitches & Stitches, CD

This is the first full-length from this Seattle punk-rock trio. They come across like a rawer version of the Fastbacks or the Muffs. Twelve songs, including a decent cover of "Riot in Cell Block #9." (BC)
www.theamazombies.com

Jason Anderson / Wolf Colonel – Something/Everything!, CD

Jason (the man behind the wolf) is sometimes pop, sometimes folk, sometimes soft and sometimes noisy. Fourteen songs of somethings. (BC)
Secretly Canadian, 1021S. Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Ants, The – Sparkling Disaster Strategies

Kind of like They Might Be Giants but without the reassuring distance of a synthesizer or tape loops. Nope, this is just an evocative guitar, sparse drums, some keyboard echoes for atmosphere, and the full force of an unstable, jittery, aggressively unaggressive singer. It's just you and the nerd, face to face. (DAL)
Sick Room Records, LTD, www.sickroomrecords.com

Apomoanon – Envoi Villon, CD

Slow, soft, long, weepy acoustic songs, mostly done by one guy who supplements his gee-tar strummin' with various instruments. He has a sad-sounding voice, which he harnesses to a nice falsetto. Sometimes he busts out with creepy licks that sound like David Lynch back-up music, but most of the time it sounds like he's trying to play himself to sleep. (DAL)
Galaxia, www.galaxia-platform.com

Artdisorder – Sounding Colors, CD

An Italian band that mixes the groovy parts of Helmet with the doodie parts of Korn. They're not as bad as Korn, but sometimes the various vocal styles and effects just seem a little Korny. I'd guess that they're influenced by alternative or "new rock" more than punk. Not great, but not the worst thing out of Italy. That would be my old roommate, Dave Valentinelli. (NS)
www.artdisorder.net

At War With Shadows – Healing Is Not An Option, CDEP

There are only four songs on this, but it should briefly satiate your metal fix, especially for old At The Gates fans—not an exact replica but a similar style. Semimelodic death metal with harsh vocals

and thrash-metal guitar licks. The first song is a real barn-blazer. They might not knock you on your ass, but they'll give you a painful Charlie Horse. There's also a 7" that has three of these four songs. (NS)
Hater Of God, POB 666, Troy, NY 12181-666

Ataris, The – ...Anywhere But Here, CD

I used to get in a huff when people picked on pop-punk, insisting that I myself would never outgrow it. I'm somewhat of a fraud and hardly listen to pop-punk anymore, but I'll still stand up for the genre. And now I have yet another great album I can point the naysayers to: this rerelease of The Ataris' first LP. The Ataris play modernized pop-punk that magically sucks the bad mood right out of even the grumpiest of grumps. I didn't like the other Ataris record I heard all that much, but this debut album is a bundle of punk-youth energy. I think it contains more songs than the original issue, and the songs are in a different order. The "enhanced" videos on the CD are set up a bit weird and made my computer shut down, but they're cool if you can get them to work. Unlike some enhanced CDs, you can't play these clips on a DVD player. Anyway, if you like mainline pop-punk, this is one of the better well-known bands. There are occasional moments where they get harder than most poppy bands, but to call it anything but pop-pop would distort its simplicity. Buy it. (AE)
Kung Fu Records, POB 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

Awak – ST, CDEP

Picture a show at your local tavern. You've got about 20 people up front watching Awak, the opening band playing their brand of well-crafted indie rock. The rest of the crowd is milling about by the bar, yelling to be heard over music that doesn't really move them. Meanwhile I'm outside, sitting on my friend's shoulders with a trench coat concealing his upper body, trying to finagle two-for-one admission. (NS)
New Amsterdam, POB 60578, Staten Island, NY 10306, www.NewAmsterdamRecords.com



Eric Bachmann – Short Careers, CD

This is the soundtrack from the upcoming indie film *Ball of Wax*. The movie is about a psycho ballplayer, and the music fits the bill, as it is piano-driven and creepy. The former singer for Archers of Loaf gets disturbing on this release. (BC) Merge Records, POB 1235 Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Bad Vibes, The – Hate Your Everything, CD

Coarse vocals against heavy, fast rock 'n' roll punk from Hostile City. *Hate Your Everything* keeps it coming with fast-paced, high-energy music, but The Bad Vibes don't do much to set themselves apart from other bands. Still, it's worth a listen. (TK) Steel Cage Records POB 29247 Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

Bantam – s/t, CD

Strong female vocals backed by a heavy guitar sound. Definitely midpaced punk/hardcore sound that will appeal to many. Nothing ground-breaking, but if you like a strong female lead backed by very competent musicians, then this is yours. (EA) Heavy Noise Records POB 2582 New York, NY 10009, www.bantamnyc.com

♫ Bats & Mice – Believe It Mammals, CD

This group features ex-members of Men's Recovery Project, Milemarker, Four Hundred Years, Sleepytime Trio, Maximillian Colby, Rah Bras, and probably a bunch of other Virginia bands. Fun new game: Six Degrees of Bats & Mice. This is like what Jeff Buckley would have done if he grew up listening to the Pixies and My Bloody Valentine and, um, didn't die. The indie rockish swirling guitars and noise breaks are worthy of Polvo or Rum Diary, but then they add emotion-laden vocals that crescendo

before disappearing into eerie silence. This is dynamic, evocative music with compellingly brainy instrumentation. The only problem, I'd say, is lyrics that tend to be a bit jargon-filled. The best lyrics are in the simple, straightforward tune "Motel," about holding your loved one tight forever. And letting the guitars carry you up to heaven. (DAL) Lovitt Records, www.lovitt.com

♫ Beatsteaks – Living Targets, CD

Epitaph has been pushing this record pretty heavily, so I've been curious about the hype. What a let-down. The single and second track, "God Knows," seems ready for alternative radio. Slick, straightforward, riff-anchored rock 'n' roll with an accessible chorus. The rest of the record—like "Let Me In," "Soothe Me," "Disconnected," "To Be Strong"—follows the same formula. "Summer" actually sounds like Creed. Between Arnim Teutoburg-Weir's throaty vocals and Bernd Hurtzhe and Peter Baumann's warm guitar riffs, the Beatsteaks are vaguely reminiscent of early Cult singles. Anybody remember L.A.'s Wank? Maybe not the best comparison but an appropriate one; both bands would have been great just putting out singles. I guess the Beatsteaks have got some history behind them, but I shouldn't be surprised that despite the hype, I don't know anyone that has anything to say about this German outfit. (GBS) Epitaph 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Beezewax – South Of Boredom, CD

You know, this sounds a little like Crowded House. Ha ha. Mix early '90s alterna-pop, occasional piano and maybe a touch of emo, and you've got Beezewax. Basically good, solid, poppy rock. Oh, and this was produced by Ken Stringfellow (of the

Posies and Big Star) and was originally released on Pop Kid if that moves you. (NS) Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK

Benjamin Gate, The – Contact, CD

Very beautiful people comprise this female-fronted, very slick and corporate, Dove-award-winning, Christian alternative pop-rock band from South Africa. Thank God and think MTV. (AS) www.ForeFrontrecords.com

Bionic – s/t, 12"

Bionic takes that aggressive melodic punk sound (think early Jawbreaker, Face to Face) and does a decent job with it. While this won't become a classic, it's not bad for bouncing around the house. This might make good house-cleaning music, which is more of a compliment than you'd think. (AT) Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Bitesize – Sophomore Slump, CD

Bitesize play uncommonly good college rock with bouncy male/female vocals and obnoxious, unintentionally cruel lyrics such as "There aren't enough bail bonds to get you out of this one." Production by John Croslin. (AE) Packing Heat!, POB 16218, Oakland, CA 94610, www.bitesize.net

Black Sea, The – Spacewalk, CD

If Hal from 2001: A Space Odyssey was more like Herbie Hancock, he'd have a band pretty much like this. Sci-fi, electronic, and experimental are all pieces of debris in The Black Sea, floating endlessly in sonic abyss. This might have to be banished to the negative zone. (JG) KLM, 420 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 213, Jericho, NY 11753, zerodirt@aol.com

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive, as long as they are released on independent record labels. However, despite our best efforts, not every record ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little ear (♫) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a record that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an ear doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your record, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

**9 Blacklist – Times Are Changing, CD**

Hallelujah! Easily one of the 10 best releases I've gotten for review in my three-plus years at *Punk Planet* so far. This oi/streetpunk band from El Paso formerly known as E.S.D. stands out from the pack by creating the catchiest shout-outs and choruses imaginable. The vocalist sounds like the guy from The Midtown Bootboys, a welcome style rarely utilized by non-bonehead bands. It's odd hearing such intelligent lyrics performed in that fierce, growling oi tone, but Mike Decay enunciates truisms through his razor-sharp voice box, creating a brilliantly dynamic sound in what often becomes a tired genre. My two favorite songs of the 11 songs featured here are "Someone Else's Time" and "Jimmy Boy." The former has the wondrous chorus "I don't want to be trapped in 1977/I don't want to be trapped in 1969/I don't want to live my life in someone else's time," and the latter takes a remarkably intellectual approach to the oft-considered theme of stopping the insanity of bar brawling. With this band at their disposal, citizens of Texas are lucky for once. Whether or not streetpunk is your thing, these guys deserve a listen. I'm going to be listening to this one for years to come, guaranteed. (AE)
Dead Mic Records, POB 19537, Austin, TX 78760, www.deadmic.com

Blood Brothers, The – March On Electric Children, CD

This is by far the messiest, most grating, most annoying record I have ever actually kind of liked. There's something kind of fun and endearing about their noise that makes me want to shrug my shoulders and shake my head while listening to it and say, "Aw, those guys!" (DAL)
Three.One.G., POB 178262, San Diego, CA 92177

Bluebird – Black Presence, CD

Bluebird may surprise some people with this highly improvised free-form rock release that has Fugazi written all over it. Lots of experimentation takes place on *Black Presence*, resulting in thick, intricate melodies and a somewhat uncertain direction. Structured instrumentals abound with sparse, haunting vocals. (BN)
Dopamine Records, POB 3221, Beverly, MA 01915, www.dopamine-records.com

9 Bomb Pops, The – Everything Looks Like Her, 7"

This two-song killer features two ex-Devil Dogs, Mighty Joe Vincent and Steve Baise. This is without a doubt a great '70s powerpop nugget. Anytime you put some of the old New Yorkers in a band, I get excited. This single isn't what I first expected; without Steve singing, you wouldn't make the Devil Dogs connection. You will make the connection, though, with the sound, big bass, pounding drums and attitude, so we are going to have a big fuckin' party tonight. The A-side songs, "Everything (Looks Like Her)" and "Living on a Memory," are both killer with no filler. Rapid Pulse lives by the motto that singles are king, and these two songs remember what music was like. You know a great single when your lazy ass still flips the record over again and again. Put this on your turntable, and if you don't have one, you're an idiot. Now put your record collection up against this single, and you will wish that the compact disc and AOR were never invented. Let's hope that we have 10 more singles from the Bomb Pops instead of an LP, one every month. (EA)
Rapid Pulse Records, POB 5075 Milford, CT 06460, www.undergroundmedicine.com/rapidweb

Boom Boom Kid – Okey Dokey Dok!, 12"

Zany, zany, zany. Boom Boom Kid is the result of an orgy among the Ramones, the Registrators and the Briefs. Fast-paced and occasionally unusual, *Okey Dokey Dok!* is a power-pop postpunk stroke of genius. As if the music wasn't good enough, the LP comes on a great-looking, colorful 12" picture disc. (BN)
Ugly Europe, Herbststr. 40/17, 1160 Vienna, Austria

Boss Martians – Making The Rounds, CD

Hey! Boss Martians are back with another power-pop masterpiece. Think the Briefs, Ramones and Cheap Trick rolled into one happy mess. Slight traces of garage rock add a degree of unpredictability to the decidedly power-pop sound. (BN)
MuSick Recordings POB 1757, Burbank CA 91507, www.musickrecordings.com

Bottles and Skulls – Amped the Fuck Up, CD

These would-be Dionysians play fast-n-nasty drunk punk from San Francisco. This release includes some old songs, new ones, and a live set. Nothing you haven't heard before. (AT)
Sickroom Records, POB 47830, Chicago IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Bratmobile – Girls Get Busy, CD

Although they are not stylistically the same Bratmobile from the early '90s, I still love their new albums. Using only a guitar, drums and sometimes keyboards, Bratmobile play short and simple punk-rock tunes carried out by Allison Wolfe's characteristic valley-girl vocals. The perfect soundtrack to an all-night girly dance party. (MG)
Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Bright Calm Blue – Asymmetry Set, CDEP

Fresh, diverse and unpretentious all come to mind when listening to *Asymmetry Set*, the latest offering from Bright Calm Blue. Comparisons to Thursday will abound, what with the spoken vocals that turn into vicious, screamed taunts. The driving melodies seethe with hardcore influences as this screamo five-piece from Lincoln, Neb., speed through the eight-song recording. The use of keyboards helps make the sound a bit more approachable, while the heavy bass lines and powerful drumming do their best to add discord to the sound. Bursting with precise anger, the dual guitars create a sonic wall that only partially succumbs to the screamed vocals. Heavy, intense and solid, *Asymmetry Set* is poised to put Bright Calm Blue on the map. (BN)
Divot Records, POB 14061, Chicago, IL 60614, www.divotrecords.com

Brokedowns, The – Let the Disappointment Begin, CD

This is the debut from this Elgin, Ill., four-piece punk band. Midwest punk means the 11 punk songs are less polished and less produced than the stuff from the coasts, which is a good thing. The Bill Hicks intro on track three made me smile. (BC)
Big Action Records, 217 Eat King, Winona, MN 55987, www.bigactionrecords.com

9 Brothers Of Conquest – All the Colors of Darkness, CD

What would a Glen Danzig-fronted rock 'n' roll band sound like? How about Adam Neal, "The Rock 'n' Roll Outlaw" (Hookers, Nashville Pussy), instead of Danzig? Crazy guitar riffs mixed with a little bit of metal and a lot of dark, catchy lyrics make this band something to listen to. Not since the Misfits have I felt the need to sing along to every song. It even inspired a bit of air guitar when no one

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

THE VILETONES, "SCREAMIN' FIST." As vinyl singles slowly disappear, I find myself longing for the days when you could find diamonds in the rough in the least expected places. Bands could form, write their best few songs, release a single and break up in a heartbeat. It wasn't that many years ago that I came across one of Canada's best kept secrets, the Viletones. They might as well have been the Canadian version of the Sex Pistols, releasing their mandatory first single on their own Vile Records in 1977. In America, we often think of Canadian punk rock as secondary. We like D.O.A and the Subhumans, but few punkers go too far past the obvious choices. I am presenting to you the best Canadian single to hit your turntable. The Viletones give us "Screamin' Fist," with two minutes of fast rhythms and snotty vocals that will make you quit your band and start over with this A-side as a reference point. The B-side starts off with a slower track, "Possibilities," that was left off of a rerelease of this single on Man's Ruin in 1997. This midpaced track is not the shining moment of the single, which comes up next. After you sit through two minutes of "Possibilities," thinking that the B-side was left for the off-tracks, the third song hits you. The anthem "Rebel" should get you singing, yelling and throwing your fists in the air. This single has recently been released as a boot-a-like and can be found through any decent distributor—try www.undergroundmedicine.com. A CD also exists as well as a bootleg LP entitled *Taste of Honey* that has the single and 14 more tracks, but I urge you to experience this single in all its glory.

Lately I have tortured my ears with: Registrators rare tracks LP, Jewws LP, Kill-A-Watts LP and all their singles, Hot Snakes new LP, a stack of old Unwound records and the fun Dag Nasty rereleases.

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was looking. From the first song to the last, the energy doesn't let up. How can you go wrong with song titles like "Kill for Rock 'n' Roll" and "Monster Creator?" With the energy they have on CD, I am really excited to see them live. Fans of metal-influenced rock shouldn't let this one slip past 'em. (TK) Go-Kart Records, POB 20 Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.GoKartRecords.com

Building Press, The – Amplitude of Frequencies Over Time, CD

Take the rigorously plotted out instrumental onslaught of the most fearsome math rock bands and throw in the dark, jazzy, sexed up moodiness of Jawbox, and you have something approaching Seattle's The Building Press. Or as a fellow from Portland's *Willamette Week* concisely says in a snippet on their onesheet: "math rock with soul." What does that mean, exactly? Well, how about instrumental rock where the guitars inundate you with many, many notes that seem to follow mathematical patterns—or at least the band suggests that with their execution, and you, like me, are too god-damned dumb to catch them cheating. I had my moments in high school math and found a lot of it really interesting, but maybe if I had these guys on my Walkman back then, I would have been more motivated. This is an intense, evocative record that makes you feel like you're the suave hero of a foreign film and makes you think like you're the dude in *A Beautiful Mind*. (DAL)

Woodson Lateral Records, www.woodsonlateral.com

Bulemics, The – Soundtrack To The Apocalypse, CD

Looking at the cover of *Soundtrack To The Apocalypse*, I was sure that it would be bad, even very bad. Having spent the past half-hour listening to it, however, I am surprisingly enamored with it. Driving rock 'n' roll guitars, head-pounding drum and bass and great, slightly distorted, vocals. Traces of street, hardcore and pure rock 'n' roll are all evident here. The Bulemics provide plenty of hooks and guitar solos to keep the purists happy. Most of the songs clock in at an impressive two minutes: fast, loud, angry and brutal. The songs with shared male and female vocal duties impressed me the most. The Bulemics are best described as an offspring of

Swindle and The Lowdowns. Well worth your hard-earned money. (BN)

Steel Cage Records, POB 29247 Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

Butthole Surfers – Humpty Dumpty LSD, CD

Over an hour of outtakes, B-sides, and other hard-to-find crumbs that have fallen from the entire butthole hoagie. This is recommended for the die-hard fans only. To everyone else is might just be described as annoying noise. (JG)

Latino Buggervell, no address given, buttholesurfers.com

Buzzsawyer – s/t, CD

Pretty damn raw rock 'n' roll from North Carolina. Reminds me of a dirtier, scummier and louder version of the Ramones. Also reminds me of the Spits, if the Spits were more polished and less dirty. And if they had no keyboards. And if their lyrics weren't ridiculously hilarious. OK, maybe it's not like the Spits at all, but for some reason I keep thinking about them while listening to this CD. All of the garage elements are present: simple song structure, Thunders-styled guitar solos and lots of blazing and fast riffage. Unfortunately, little variation of the garage-rock formula causes all of the songs to sound the same after a while. It may also cause Buzzsawyer to be lumped in with the plethora of rock 'n' roll revival bands currently out there, thus burying them beneath a sea of denim, beer bottles and shag cuts. By the way, what kind of name is "Buzzsawyer"? Is it some sort of reference that I am not aware of? Because it doesn't sound incredibly cool, and I know that rock 'n' roll bands are all about being cool. Just an observation. At least the rock does buzz. Anyway, if you like '70s hard rock with a punk edge, check this out. (MG) Buzzsawyer, 107 W. Main St., Apt. F, Carrboro, NC 27510, www.anglefire.com/band/buzzsawyer

Cadillac Blindside – These Liquid Lungs, CD

According to the Fueled By Ramen website, Cadillac Blindside have broken up. This, their last release, has all the sounds of a band that has played with Less Than Jake, Dillinger Four, Dashboard Confessional and Alkaline Trio. This release has great production and has a lot of energy in its recording. (EA) Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563 Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Calvary – Outnumbered Is Outflanked, 12"

What do you do after having released some of the most influential hardcore records of the 1990s? If you're Council Records, you put out *Outnumbered Is Outflanked*—a fierce, strong, commanding 12" from the fine lads of Calvary (on sky-blue vinyl, no less). In a time when so much hardcore comes from grunting Visigoths or faux-poetic, thick-glassed types, it's refreshing to hear a record that actually demands attention. And oh, does this one deserve it. With its intelligent lyrics and stick-in-your-head melodies, this is anything but background music. Calvary plays the kind of fast, emotional, and energetic music that makes you remember why you got into punk in the first place. Half-sung, half-spat lyrics flow over driving guitars, evoking deep-rooted feelings without falling prey to cliché. And although Calvary's obvious influences—Magazine, Wire, Rites of Spring—may span a couple of decades, these guys avoid simple imitation. It would have been adequate to toss together some driving melodies and quick drum fills, but these 12 songs suggest a maturity and thoughtfulness that's all too rare. Not a single note missteps. *Outnumbered Is Outflanked* will probably win attention because of its "ex" factor (the band includes former members of Current and Ottawa). Such plaudits are accurate but unnecessary; this record is good enough to stand on its own merit. (AT) Council Records POB 220691 Chicago, IL 60622, www.councilrecords.com

Cave In – Tides of Tomorrow, CDEP

The onesheet with this said the band was emulating *Lies* by Guns 'n' Roses and *Jar of Flies* by Alice In Chains—two reasons to trash it immediately. It's apparently a "departure" for the band because it's more mellow ("Tides of Tomorrow"), but there's plenty of alt-radio-friendly rock on here. Not bad. Hydra Head Records, POB 990248, Boston, MA 02199, www.hydrahead.com

Cells, The – We Can Replace You, CD

Witty pop-punk injected with twee. They get points for mentioning Jeffrey Dahmer in a cute context. I wouldn't be surprised if Chicago likes these boys and

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

DAVID BOWIE, ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS. 1972—before punk rock and before most of the music all you young kids have ever heard. But that year an Englishman named David Bowie transformed himself into the glam king (or queen I guess) Ziggy Stardust, a character that Bowie killed off in his heyday after a successful tour. A sort of rockstar weirdo concept record, *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* still holds up as one of the best records of all time—and may be the first real glam record ever. The glam scene leads to the '70s greats (New York Dolls, T-Rex, The Stooges, Mott, Slade), then to the '80s greats (Faster Pussycat, Love/Hate, Hanoi Rocks, The Cult), then to the few '90s glam-punk bands like Trash Brats. In a way, this record started it all for those of us that don't mind putting on a little make up to look our best for the ladies! David Bowie totally rocks out on one of the greatest songs ever in "Suffragette City," which boasts the best line in "ahhh...wham bam thank you ma' am!" The title track has one of the coolest guitar licks ever done by Mick Ronson and David Bowie himself. Sure, many of the songs are sort of ballad-type slow rockers, but that doesn't mean they don't kick ass. The somber and sexy moods created by this record will get you all hot and bothered and unsure of which sex you want in your bedroom next. This is a classic record (actually I've got the cassette with five added bonus tracks such as "Velvet Goldmine" and the demo version of "Ziggy Stardust" to name a few) throughout the 11-song mystic journey. David Bowie is one of the very few old rockers that still is interesting to watch, but do yourself a favor and go back to 1972, before he was a vampire, and when he was setting the UK rock scene on fire! And by all means go to a local used record shop to pick this up and support the little man, not The Man.

Top Five Things I Saw at the Tampa, Fla., Stop of the Warped Tour 2002: 1. Local sleazy punk band PIG PEN, 2. Flogging Molly, 3. Total Chaos, 4. The animal-rights stands, 5. The hot & young mainstream/alternative-looking girls, especially the girl with the Iron Maiden patch!



their catchy songs. They've opened for Apples In Stereo, Frank Black, Jonathan Richman, etc. (JS) Orange Records, www.orangerecordings.com

Charcoal Human / Upside Down Flag – split, 7"

Two Australian grindcore bands that are politically charged and both sort of sound the same. Lots of yelling, blazing guitars and pounding drums. (BC) Deplorable POB 191 Balmain NSW 2041 Australia

Chatham – Something Fell, CDEP

Self described as "lazy-core," these guys lilt along through eight songs of slower alternative rock laced with some interesting guitar lines, especially on "Efftidy." From my old-guy perspective, it could use a little more balls and passion, but it's pleasing nonetheless. (AS)

Vertical Verve Records, POB 2097, Riverview, MI 48192, www.verticalverve.com

Che Chapter 27 – Profit Prophet, CD

Politically charged punk with a metal edge and strong female vocals. Fans of bands like Submission Hold, take note. If the posts I read about their recent tour are true, then this is a strong band live as well as on disc. (EA) Cheworx POB 27006, 360 Main St. Concourse, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3 Canada

Cherry Valence, The – Riffin, CD

Hey! It's another dirty-glam rock 'n' roll bar-band. They've also got a little funkiness in 'em, like that old band White Trash. I've a feeling that applications for groupies are always accepted here. (JG) Estrus! POB 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.estrus.com

Chiyoko – Cinematic, CD

The promo bio sheet for this long-awaited disc had more name-dropping than I saw when I used to review metal bands for the school paper. This former singer for Squash Blossom puts out her solo effort, which has songs that all sound like something from James Bond movie soundtracks. Very soothing and enchanting music! (BC) Boo-The-Cat Records, 1659 N. Milwaukee Ave., PMB 151, Chicago, IL 60647, www.chiyoko.net

Christiansen – Forensics Brothers and Sisters, CDEP

Interesting arrangements, inventive guitar noises, tasteful and sparingly added horns and keyboards, and intriguing, obtuse lyrics pulsate the listener throughout these six cuts. Very Fugazi-like, in both

tightness and presentation, but it's the super-crisp production and lack of vocal urgency that keep it from going over the top. (AS)

Revelation Records, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA, 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Ward Churchill – Doing Time: The Politics of Imprisonment, CD

Recording of a Dec. 15, 2000, speech by Native American activist Churchill given at the Doing Time conference in Winnipeg. Despite its title, much of the talk is dedicated to the topic of counterintelligence activities against activists. Churchill isn't the most engaging speaker, and his arguments, while valid, aren't always convincing. (CR) G7 Welcoming Committee Records, Box 27006, 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg MB R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Cliftons, The – Sex, Drugs, and Alcohol, CD

Remember that scene in *Star Trek IV* when Spock and Kirk are on a bus with an obnoxious punk rocker? He's a great movie caricature of punk: He sports a funky Mohawk, studs 'n' spikes on his leather jacket, a snotty snarl on his face, and a boom box that screams, "I say SCREW YOU." Shocking! Yep, he's one scary mofo—that is, until Spock goes all Vulcan Death Grip on his ass and shows him who's boss. Why do I bring this up? Because The Cliftons apparently modeled their whole sound and schtick off that hackneyed character. Their music is loud, fast, and defiant straightforward punk—which would be great if it were done well. Unfortunately, these nine songs offer little in the way of originality. Although the songs are quick, they aren't quick-witted; witness the embarrassing onslaught of songs devoted solely to boozin' it up, dude. And then there's "Registered Sex Offender," which is an open letter to the girl who had the audacity to get the singer "on a list," as he puts it. Yech. Trite and puerile, this record is the physical embodiment of every mainstream negative punk stereotype. The music is middling, the prefab attitude is passé, and the message is sophomoric at best. Where's a Vulcan when you need one? (AT) SuperSpeedway Music Inc, 304 S. Third Street, San Jose, CA 95112

COCO – The COCO Sound, CD

So I was having a bad day—I mean a *really* bad day. I was sunburned, my toilet overflowed, and the rent was due. Enter COCO. This record really brought

me out of my doldrums. One minute I'm in line at Walgreen's buying Lysol and scowling at a little girl bouncing a ball, and the next minute I'm doing the robot in my living room saying embarrassing things like "funkalicious flava" to no one in particular. This Olympia two-piece, featuring Chris Sutton of Dub Narcotic on drums and super diva Olivia Ness on bass and most vocals, takes funk hooks and grooves and strips them down to a very bare, essential sound. Kind of like DIY garage funk. (DAL) K Records, www.krecs.com

Commercials, The – Twenty Years Tonight, CD

Abrasive punk-pop songs about love and its attendant miseries. If you think guys who call their drummer called "Pudge" and yell a lot can't be sensitive, think again. With the exception of the ballads "Immediately" and "The Last, Sung First," these ain't your father's love songs. (CR) Jump Start, POB 10296, State College, PA 16805, www.jumpstartrecords.com

Common Rider – This Is Unity Music, CD

This is the sophomore release of Second Coming of Jesse of Op Ivy fame. The sophomore thing is usually the not as good as the first record type of thing, BUT if my memory serves correct, this is a far superior record. I think I actually hated—or "strongly did not enjoy"—the first effort by the former members of Screeching Weasel, Op Ivy and Squirtgun. The punk-rock-steady beat returns with more socially conscious tunes and a really enjoyable soundtrack that gets the head a-bobbing and my tootsies almost skanking. This is by no means Op Ivy. It comes off a bit fresher and is a bit more refined in a way the whole family can enjoy. I can actually imagine the old punk guys from the from back in the day listening to this record with their punk-rock kids, both enjoying it. But I digress—this fucking rocks it out. Whether the tune is mellow or rocking, singing or shouting, this has the elements to become a classic that only those in the know are down with. I'm sure people will buy this because of the attached names, but those who may not be down will be pleasantly surprised. I mean it. (DM) Hopeless Records, www.hopelessrecords.com

Conation – The Dichotomy of Earth and the Human Race, CD

A strange mix of fast, screaming hard core with melodic moments interwoven gives this a rather fresh sound.

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

Some records of the late '80s and early '90s are already considered classics, but we're still in an era when anything post-1985 or so is considered too new to be too important. What bullshit. No one would deny the influence of, say, Heroin's *Paper Bag 7"*, but very few '90s hardcore EPs get the recognition they deserve. My classic pick this month is the DIS SUCKS' *A ROOM WITH A VIEW OF A WORLD OF SHIT 7"* on Subvert & Deny. This little slab of vinyl is as classic as anything and was hugely influential on many of today's contemporary hardcore and screamo bands, despite never getting the recognition it deserved. The lyrics are assaultive and full of profanity (every other word). The crusty vocals intermingle with the alarmingly complex punk-metal-grind-crust-hardcore music to glorious effect. Each of the seven songs could break a baby's eardrum, even at low volume. From the opening words of the first song, ("I don't want to/and I don't have to/and I'm not gonna be like you/know you hate me/but you can't make me/'cause I'm gonna do what I wanna do") to the final lyric of the last song ("I can feel a brighter way/but it hasn't gotten here yet"), this is one of those 7"s that feels like a double LP! This record is epic and flawless. Maybe in some "better day," Dis Sucks will finally get the recognition they deserve.

I've also been listening to the Jawbreaker Etc. and Antischism double LPs; the ANTiSEEN double 7" reissue of Drastic and E.P. Royalty; and the Half-Life All Our Yesterdays CD.

congress of the cow / dag nasty

It's like cutting a Rorschach record and something on Merge records and gluing them together in Australia. My only complaint is the mix is really flat, and I know it is keeping me from liking it even more. (EA)
Deplorable Recordings, POB 191 Balmmain NSW 2041, Australia, www.deplorablerecordings.com

Congress Of The Cow – s/t, CD

Some cuts almost rock, are almost decently constructed with a nice sound ("Ice Age," "Fin Del Dia") and pretty guitar riffs against faster, louder sections of driving bass, drums and guitar. The San Diego band has opened locally for Frank Black. They try hard. (JS)
M-Theory Records, 3004 Juniper St., San Diego, CA 92104, www.mtheoryrecords.com

Control, The – The Forgotten EP, CD

Old-school hardcore has been done by hundreds of bands, but The Control do it better than a thousand. Har har. Blazing rhythms, searing guitars, angry screaming, and the occasional melody combine for six straightforward minutes of hardcore the way they used to make it. (AT)
Go-Kart Records, POB 20, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Cool Concern, The – Demonstration, CD

The three brothers who constitute this band must have listened to a lot of Dischord releases growing up. The D.C. influence is apparent, with Fugazi-style vocals and well-developed dynamics. There's nothing spectacular or jaw-droppingly great going on here, but it's not bad. (AT)
Salty Records, www.thecoolconcern.com

Corn On Macabre – s/t, 7"

Spazz-sounding hardcore with plenty of blast beats and silly lyrics about horror movies and randomness. The oversized packaging is pretty impressive, though not too practical for filing in your 7" collection. (TK)
Magic Bullet Record Co., POB 6337 Woodsbridge, VA 22195, www.geocities.com/magicbulletsc

☞ Craw – Bodies For Strontium 90, CD

This easily gets the "Rock Out With Your Cock Out" award. It's a hard-driving machine that cannot be stopped. There sound is sharp and precise while being very hard and forceful. I know no one

has heard that amazing record by the Turing Machine on Jade Tree, but musically, this matches its precision but overpowers it tenfold. OK, try this on: Imagine if Helmet, during their heyday, could play a lot more technical/prog stuff while not losing the incredibly heavy punk edge. Vocally, this guy has his own thing going on, like he's having a forceful conversation. Part stern debate, part singing. It's comforting to hear something on Hydra Head that's not "more metal than fuck." I dig their stuff, but it's a bit much for old fucks like me in their late 20s. Back to Craw, *Bodies For Strontium 90* really rocks out with their bleeding, beaten-down hearts on their sleeves. Amen. (DM)
Hydra Head POB 990248 Boston, MA 02199

Crime In Choir – s/t, CD

Call it Math Rock or Prog Lite or No Wave, these founding members of At The Drive-In and Hella provide an instrumental soundtrack that is flowing and smooth while following a certain formula. Using the principles from jazz jam sessions, there are these intense drum parts escorted by a collection of tight yet loose guitars, synthesizers and organs. If you feel it while listening to Mice Parade, Triztessa or ICU (IQU), then definitely check this out. (DM)
Omnibus POB 16-2372 Sacramento, CA 95816

☞ Crosstide – Seventeen Nautical Miles, CD

All right kids, I'm going to throw out that word that'll make many of you shit yourself: emo. Now wait, I mean it in a good way. Crosstide takes you from the soft, sandy beaches of moanful ballads to the rocky shores of posthardcore. Musically, this reminded me of Kill Creek and Gameface. The lead singer, Bret Vogel, occasionally has this falsetto thing, and at other times he actually sounds similar to Jeff Gameface. This will definitely get another listen from me. Highly recommended if you're alone, teary-eyed and want to throw back some whiskey—and maybe play with yourself later. (JG)
Rise Records, POB 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

☞ Cub Country – High Unita High, CD

Featuring appearances from bandmates Chris Daly and Blake Schwarzenbach, Cashe Tolman from Rival Schools, and some other fools, Jeremy Chatelain's adventures in alt-country (under the

guise Cub Country), isn't that bad. Keep in mind, though, it's only Jets to Brazil bassist Jeremy Chatelain. (Read: rhythm man venture's into unfamiliar territory.) "St. Louis" and "O Great Telephone" are bouncy cuts that hit the delicate alt-country sound Chatelain may be reaching for, but "Butterfly" falls flat on its face in an attempt at sleazy juke-joint blues, and "Through My Window" is a grimacing affair that comes off as schmaltsy. Ultimately, the record is an even mix somewhere between the aforementioned songs. A valiant effort that warrants comparisons to Tom Petty's solo material, Wilco, and Whiskeytown, Chatelain's voice nonetheless isn't strong enough on its own. Although he soars at times (as on the title track), *High Unita High* doesn't ultimately clear Chatelain past acoustic indie pop. But let's face it, like Mike Ness' *Cheating At Solitaire* and Ryan Adams' latest, if you're a fan, you'll give this record a spin. This only makes me further wonder what Rhett Miller's solo outing will sound like. (GBS)
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Currituck County – Unpacking My Library, CD

Fancy finger picking on the steel string and banjo. This is a pretty well-done country-rock album. Fans of Elliot Smith could possibly dig this. Even though they rhyme "comet" with "vomit," I must have left my spurs at Neal's house because I just can't get into this. (JG)
Teenbeat Records, no address given, www.teenbeat-records.com

Curse, The – Six Song Demo, CD

These kids are going to be so strong if they make it to their first LP. The Curse made sure to pay attention during HC Punk 101. Drawing influences from Swiz and Kid Dynamite and other heavy-but-melodic punk bands, they follow the punk mantra of us against them, wrong against right and we shall overcome. Keep an eye on these guys—you won't be disappointed. (DM)
The Curse, phillycurse@hotmail.com

☞ Dag Nasty – Minority of One, CD

Could the *Can I Say* lineup up of Dag Nasty release a new record and capture their old glory again? I was both curious and hesitant while listening to *Minority*

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

In light of the recent Chicago-themed issue, I wanted to talk about a FEW OF THE CHICAGO BANDS AND RECORDS THAT I LOVED THROUGHOUT MY TEEN YEARS, growing up in the Chicagoland area during the early to mid-'90s. Besides the bigger names in Chi-town punk at this time (Screeching Weasel, the Vindictives, Los Crudos, etc.), there was a whole wave of bands often overlooked in the grand scheme of things. One band in particular, Sidekick Kato (my high school fave), was unlike anything I had heard at that time, even after years of listening to only pop-punk and punk-rock staples. A band that many people loved to hate, Sidekick Kato played a drunken, emo-like style of music with grand buildups, heavy-on-the-bass riffs and an overall the saddest-of-the-sad general sound. Their first 7", *Des Plaines* (on the great Dyslexic Records label), quickly became a favorite among depressed and angst-filled teens all over northeast Illinois. Sidekick Kato later put out a split 7" with local greats Apocalypse Hoboken (again on Dyslexic Records) that featured one of their best-loved songs, "Kruses." Two full lengths followed on Johann's Face Records, which are great, but really lack the energy of the early singles. With all this talk about Dyslexic Records, I can't forget to mention one of my all-time favorite Chicago comps: Dyslexic's *Planet Mini Van* compilation. This disc featured a slew of underground bands that deviated from the standard punk-rock sound (International Hoodwink, Tiny, Tommyrot, etc.) and had tracks from some of the more recognized bands of the time (Apocalypse Hoboken). Ah, the memories. You can find any of the above-mentioned records, most likely, in a used record bin near you, and Sidekick Kato's full-length albums are still available.

Ear Candy as of Late: Jawbreaker, *Etc.*; Dillinger Four, *Situationist Comedy*; Erase Errata, *Other Animals*; The Siderunners, *Ain't Inventin' the Wheel*; Sleater-Kinney, *One Beat*; Ten Grand, *The Comprehensive List...*; and all things Gun Club.



of *One* for the first time. I remember their first come-back LP, *Four on the Floor*, and I haven't pulled it out of my collection since its release. Once again we meet Dag Nasty reformed and ready to play more of their classic punk that kicks the crap out of today's emo. I can tell you what got me into Dag Nasty when I was a mere lad: the break down. Listen to any classic Dag Nasty song, and you will hear a part when the guitar chord rings out while the rhythm continues pounding, then Dave (earlier Shaun and later Peter) gives us a heartfelt spoken line reminiscent of Minor Threat's best spoken parts. Unlike *Four on the Floor*, I found two songs with this punk rock trick, and both would make great singles: "Bottle This" and "Incinerate." All in all, my review is simple. There are some great songs on this when compared to Brian Baker's band, Bad Religion or Dave Smalley's band, Down By Law. So is it worth your money? As long as you don't expect something as classic as their first two records, then you should really enjoy this record. (EA) Revelation Records, POB 5232 Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

♀ Dame Fate – Time And Tide: Wait For No Man, CD

Dame Fate's debut album, *Time and Tide*, has been advertised quietly yet pervasively in *Magnet* and all the other rock mags and zines. An "underground" grrrl act with some cache, they're part druggy, slutty Donnas and part arty Mary Timony Band. The Washington D.C. girlie act's debut was produced in part by uber-indie rocker and fellow D.C. native, Phil Manley (Trans Am). The title says "Wait for No Man," but Tide is nauseatingly male-obsessed, an album of suicidal cock worship to the extent of self-abuse ("cocaine's / a lovely drug / like you it makes me sort of numb / and alcohol is a depressant") and to the exclusion of any other subject matter (besides butterflies and drugs). A mystical sound fits the subject matter—you know how deep things get with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. The songs are mostly backed by atmospheric guitar on the minor chord and bass, with some twisty, garage-style plucking, fronted by Yalan Papillon's vocals, which have a nice timbre. "Forget Him" is a pretty song. I like the opening riff and the structure of "Stealing Hearts"—Dame Fate starts to rock here—but it also sounds like a Pretenders rip-off, which

irritated me when I realized it. The lyrics need strengthening. Lines like "I'm a romantic" crooned over and over ("River Letters") are annoying. These ladies should regroup, rethink and rewrite—and for gosh sakes, ye dames, question fate! (JS) Lovitt Records, POB 248, Arlington, VA 22210, www.lovitt.com

Danielson Famile, The – A Prayer For Every Hour, CD

My favorite avant-gardists at their purist, this is the punk record (a reissue here) that began as a school project for the whole family. Stop/starts, bells, whistles, and cool guitar riffs. It sounds like nothing else and sounds great. The falsetto vocals are weird and cool. It also comes with a special CD-ROM. Buy this. (JS) Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Day Of Less – Ad Hoc, CD

Haven't we heard enough of these emo/metal bands? I know I have. The heavy parts aren't bad, but the extreme style shifts a la Grade or Keepsake just make me wince. So if there's some mad scientist out there mixing these two elements, they really need to get back to the tried-and-true formula: Funk + Metal = Gold! (NS) Rise, POB 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

♀ Deerhoof – Reveille, CD

I've heard about this band for years, and I never gave them the time of day, EVER. "Yeah, Deerhoof. Weird shit, man. Whatever." Now I'm completely taken by how amazing this group is. It's hard to explain, so bear with me. Imagine modern-day lounge music with a cute-sounding vocalist who only occasionally sings. So before they play this big gig, someone puts acid or some kind of psychotropic drug in their drinks. However, the drugs used were soaked in liquid sugar, so instead of tripping out, everyone has a psychotic sugar high. Still with me? So they play this really wiggled out set that goes through all the emotions: happy, sad, paranoid, anxious, spastic. But instead of sounding like shit, they play the most ingenious set ever, and the kids go wild! This is so dope on so many levels. If you have an open mind or are trying to find the ideal opening act for Mike Patton, look no further. Expand thy mind and thy record collection. (DM) 5 Rue Christine, www.5rc.com

Destination Daybreak / New Mexican Disaster Squad – split, CD

Destination Daybreak has a female vocalist and some country influences, and New Mexican Disaster Squad are harder and have an early '80s hardcore influence. Makes for an odd split. (AE) Breaker Breaker, POB 536071, Orlando, FL 32853

Destroyer – This Night, CD

Fans await with outstretched hands and won't be disappointed, for he of Thief and Streethawk returns with 15 typically literate, mind-bending numbers packed with soul-stirring riffs and rocking syncopation. Dan Bejar was a New Pornographer, and Destroyer is his connoisseur's band. He offers unto the world another great album. Hallelujah! (JS) Merge Records, POB 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 25714, www.mergerecords.com

♀ Dillinger Escape Plan w/ Mike Patton, The – Irony is a Dead Scene, CDEP

Right off the bat, I must admit I'm more of a Mike Patton fan than a Dillinger Escape Plan man. But when I opened my box of *Punk Planet* reviews and saw this, I jumped up and down like a giddy school girl. The Dillinger Escape Plan play mathematical postpunk with an erratic, dizzying ferocity—a perfect playground for Mike Patton to unleash his multiple vocal personalities. As a Patton aficionado, think of the ever-changing textures of Mr. Bungle with the viciousness of Fantomas. Highlights for me were the tracks "Pig Latin" and "When Good Dogs Do Bad Things," which focus on melody while staying true to avant-garde rock. These harmonies were immediately imbedded in my head with glee. I was actually lucky enough to see D.E.P. play live, when they opened up for Tomahawk here in NYC. They put on one of the most dynamic stage shows I've seen in quite awhile. If you're a fan of either band, this EP won't disappoint. (JG) Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

♀ Dillinger Four – Situationist Comedy, CD

Flirting with the structure but disobedient to adherence to pop-punk standards, this four-some is creepy like Hamburger Helper Lasagna: You recognize the form, but it's so unlike what it imitates, the product ultimately has its own distinct flavor. These nose-picking Motorhead dis-

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gitzlaff

BRAND NEW UNIT, *DIDDLEY SQUAT*. One of Canada's No. 1 exports and most underrated bands, BNU play melodic skate-core with a death wish. This album (on Creative Man Records) explodes immediately upon contact. Although their other albums are equally impressive, there's something about their last full-length and the particular place and time that holds a place in my heart. Every member of this quartet carries his weight. Drummer Gabe violently pummels the skins as if meant for destruction, Jinx's guitar work shreds relentlessly, Ben's bass pounds your skull, and Gary's vocals are forced out with every last breath. This is an utterly complete expulsion of punk-rock energy. Songs like "R.E.S.P.E.C.T.," "Guns For Everyone," "Thick Skull," and "Asshole, Stereo Control Freak" will have you bouncing off the fucking wall. I especially love the track "Crack" and have fond memories of walking to class, bobbing my head and breaking into air-guitar, completely oblivious to those around me. This is music made for the love of music, and every person I've played BNU for has been drawn to them. These fellas played one of the most electric sets I've ever seen, and it's a shame they ended their existence while still on top of the game. Hunt this one down and devour without utensils! For second helpings, look for *Looking Back Again* on BYO Records. You won't be disappointed.

Remaining Constant: IN-DK, *Kill Whitey!*; Pavers, *Wrecking Ball EP*; A.G.'s, *This Earth Sucks*; Bad Brains, *Black Dots*; Happy Campers, *S'more Core*; Dag Nasty, *Minority of One*; Bad Astronaut, *Capture The Flag*; Morning Glory; Dillinger Escape Plan/Mike Patton EP; Student Rick; J. Michael Straczynski's *Rising Stars*; and M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*.

disaster, the / epoxies

ciples smack you upside the head for underestimating pop punk while dropping a smart-ass remark that reveals a deeper intelligence and sensitivity. *Situationist Comedy* challenges the limits of pop punk with awkward time changes and lyrical demands of action—the record revels in its refreshing and welcomed disturbance from the norm. The way Lemmy Kravitz atonally spits “like salt thrown over the shoulder/a coin tossed in a fountain/not unlike a knock on wood” on “The Father, The Son, and The Homosexual/Single Parent” is as much a flagrant middle figure to pop entrapments as is the fact that “laborissuesinthetoydepartment” sounds like four different songs crammed together. Within the mix of the smoke-strained vocals, maniacally urgent and uneven guitar play, we’re slipped a lesson in personal politics—but not without a good laugh. Who else would title a song that ends “this isn’t you/it’s just what you do/don’t mistake the irony of calling it a ‘living’/if you feel like no one/if you feel like nothing/you’ve only been taking what they’re giving” “A Floater Left With Pleasure In the Executive Washroom”? Openly critiquing the commercial acquiescence of the scene with songs like “D4 = Putting the ‘F’ back in ‘Art’” and “New Punk Fashions For The Spring Formal,” Dillinger Four manages to avoid alienating with their accessible political observations. D4’s sound isn’t conventionally precise or technical; it’s calculated and deliberately simple. Although *Situationist Comedy* is nothing groundbreaking, Dillinger Four have nonetheless uttered a challenge to others getting by on three straight-ahead chords and a yelp. (GBS)
Fat Wreck Chords, POB 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Disaster, The – Black and White and Red All Over, CD

Excellent, fast hardcore full-length that’s like an even better version of Lifetime. Refined and polished production takes away from the energy, but this still kicks mucho asses. (AE)
Alone Records, POB 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

CRINGER, *GREATEST HITS VOL. 1*. Singer/guitarist Lance Hahn has been a steady part of my life since high school, when I picked up my first collection of J Church singles. I am a little upset that I didn’t even hear of Cringer until a few years later, which is what I’m hoping to avoid with anyone reading this. They made some of the most catchy and addictive pop punk ever to come out of the Bay area, with smart, politically minded lyrics. There is a long list of musicians that contributed to Cringer from 1985 to 1991, and bands that formed in their wake include: The Wrong, Good Grief, Naked Aggression, The Grups, and of course J Church. Because I have been a fan of Lance’s work for a long time, I felt horrible when I received the most recent Honey Bear Records newsletter informing everyone that his apartment building burned to the ground, destroying all Honey Bear merch, future releases, master tapes, DATs, and all of his personal belongings. As for Cringer, *Greatest Hits Vol. 1* was released on Vinyl Communications, and to my knowledge is still in print. If you have a problem picking up a new copy, it seems like every other used CD store carries at least one release from them. Good luck, Lance. For information on helping Lance Hahn, visit www.j-church.com, or e-mail honeybearrecords@hotmail.com.

Currently listening to: Against Me, *Reinventing Axl Rose*; Modern Machines, *Huberty*; Fifteen, *Buzz*; Jawbreaker, *Etc.*; Lemonheads, *Lick*; John Brown Battery, *Hiretsukan*.

Disband / Kudzu Wish – At the Scene of the Accident split, CD

The song titles are all such elaborate smarty-pants jokes that you want to smack both bands just from reading the dust jacket. But then, well, their tuneage is not so easily dismissed. They play that sort of slowed down but intense emo/math rock jambalaya that I think has become more common in the past year or so—someone should name that genre one of these days. There’s definitely still a good deal of “hey, look what we’re doing” snottiness present in their playing and especially in their prosy, poetic vocals, but there’s talent here and even a few tunes that stick with you. Both bands, incidentally, sound very similar, which leads me to wonder if this really is a split release or just another in joke. (DAL)
Ernest Jennings Record Company, www.ernestjennings.com

Division Of Laura Lee – Black City, CD

Melodic pop-rock from Sweden in the vein of The Hives. This debut full-length contains 12 heavy and pulsating songs. This band rocks so well, one of Epitaph’s little labels put this disc out. (BC)
Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026

Divit – Broadcaster, CD

For a Northern California staple in the pop-punk scene, Divit sounds like they’re from So Cal. Lyrically mundane and at times petty (“Plan B”), Divit employs Bad Religion-esque vocal harmonies with clean guitar tones and laid-back drum beats. Rock over Antioch. (GBS)
7071 Warner Avenue, Suite F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.nitrorecords.com

Dread 101 / Social Insecurity – split, 12”

Well, it’s been a year, so I guess we’re due for World Trade Center cover art now, like on this split from the Czech Republic. One band is blistering metal, the other your usual straight-up punk. Put the needle anywhere—it all sounds the same. (KR)
Insane Distribution, c/o Barvak, POB 6, 501 01 Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic, www.insanesociety.net

Dennis Driscoll – Voices in the Fog CD

Usually the boy-with-acoustic guitar genre gets old, but Dennis’ voice is so sweet and earnest that it’s nearly impossible not to be charmed. His simple-

but-not-simplistic lyrics float over pretty ditties, and the end result is lovely. If Lloyd Dobler were to write little songs, these are the ones he’d write for you. (AT)
K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

Drunk Injuns – From Where The Sun Now Stands I Will Fight No More, Forever, CD

Looking much like the punk rock Gwar, Drunk Injuns had a major role in bringing attention to skate punk in the early 1980s. Decked out in scary masks and costumes, they combined hardcore attitude with skate-punk tenacity. Think Dead Boys and U.S. Bombs with a small dose of three-chord influences. (BN)

Alternative Tentacles Records, POB 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Engine Down – Demure, CD

This is the third release from Engine Down, which features members of Sleepytime Trio, The Weak Link Breaks, and Bughummer. A smart, mathy-type indie rock with light vocals. Better than average stuff. (TK)

Lovitt Records, POB 248 Arlington, VA 22210

Enon – High Society, CD

This 15-song rock release is on the great label Touch and Go Records. Enon is from Brooklyn, and they deliver a laid-back, ultra-cool-sounding rock ‘n’ roll sound. They even throw in a synthesizer every once in a while to keep it interesting. (BC)
Touch & Go Records, POB 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

Epoxies – S/T, LP

Damn, what a great record this is. I had been playing this thing for weeks before it arrived to *Punk Planet* and am very happy to review it for you. This turbo-charged, new-wavish band has so much to offer in this stale millennium. Following up their fantastic debut single on Dirtnap, you get a full-length that contains all the songs on the single, except the essential Adam and the Ants cover “Beat My Guest.” After you have ordered both the single and LP, you are in for a treat. Whether you are captivated by Roxy’s vocals or the synth in the background that keeps a sort of cheesy rhythm, you can’t help but love it. Even if you didn’t like the new-wave explosion of the ‘80s, you can—and will—love this. Why? Simply put, the Epoxies don’t redo the sound of the past; they build on it. Classic tracks



such as "You" and "Bathroom Stall" really stick out, and because this isn't break-neck speeds, you can sing along. I have not been so in love with a record in such a long time; I have a renewed faith in punk rock and am counting the days until they come to my town. You need to go to their website (www.theepoxies.com) and see the video and pictures to appreciate the heart, sweat and tears that the Epoxies pour into their band. (EA) Dirtnap Records POB 21249 Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Everest – The Road Less Traveled, CD

There's nothing "less traveled" about this record; it follows the well-worn path of emoish power pop. Picture the Get Up Kids back in the days when they wrote rock songs. (The singer really sounds like Matt Pryor at times.) It's catchy but mostly generic. (KR) Join The Team Player Records, Altoettingerstr. 6A, 81673 Muenchen, Germany, www.jointheteamplayer.com

Exercise – We Gotta Tonight, CD

Catchy and creative indie rock—or maybe posthardcore in a mid '90s Dischord way. Great musicianship and a cool singing style that reminds me of 3 Penny Opera. One of those bands where, despite your musical tastes, you'd have to admit that they're pretty good. So yeah, I admit it. (NS) Learning Curve, 2200 Fourth St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418, www.learningcurverecords.com

Eyes Upon Separation – I Hope She's Having Nightmares, CD

Why would you wish nightmares upon someone? Crazy math rock trash this side of the Locusts that's unfocused and utterly ridiculous. I wish just once these sorts of bands would surprise me with "unprofound" odes of cheese and silly love songs. (GBS) Uprising Records, POB 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Fagatron – s/t, CD

"This is a dancy party revolt (so fucking shake it)" Fagatron sings on the lead track, "Anthem," and from that moment you just fall in love with their brand of minimalist queer punk. Totally fun-yet-pissy, shake-your-ass type stuff in the vein of what used to flow like water from Olympia. Now

Fagatron's rocking it in Nebraska. I love the way amazing stuff just spreads like a virus. I hope they never find a cure. (DS)

Agitprop, POB 748 Hanover, MA 02339, www.agitproprecords.com

Fall Out Boy / Project Rocket – split, CDEP

Very competent musicianship and excellent production highlight this three-songs-apiece split. Project Rocket toy with new-wave pop rock for the masses, while Fall Out Boy put a tad bit more punk, a la Green Day, into their version of these nearly emo, relationship-oriented tunes. (AS) Uprising Records, POB 42259, Philadelphia, PA, 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Farewell Bikeride, The – This is How it Goes, CD
Melodic punk rock with a lady singer that makes me think of Discount. The songs get incredibly monotonous and less interesting as the CD goes on—let's learn about variation, please. Not bad but not superior. (MG) Optional Records, <http://optional.port5.com>

Fat Day – IV, CD

Fat Day is a long-running psycho-nerd rock band from the beer-loving town of Boston. This is strange shit, and the promo sheet called it "Alien Punk." Yeah from Planet Crazy Ass! (BC) Dark Beloved Cloud, POB 2096 Grand Central Station, NYC, NY 10163, www.darkbelovedcloud.com

Fiendz, The – Redemption, CD

Alternative pop/rock mostly dedicated to the theme of love gone wrong. The Fiendz have been kicking around the East Coast scene for 15 years now, and it shows in their tight, focused melodies, big hooks, and pleasant harmonies. The ability to craft a solid pop tune is their biggest strength. (CR) Black Pumpkin Records, Inc., POB 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377, www.blackpumpkin.com

Fire Show, The – Saint the Fire Show, CD

A complicated and passionate posthumous release, this one demands the listener's full attention. There's so much going on (folk, thick beats, whispered missives, cold guitar, to name a few); somehow it works in its striking originality. The cover of "You Are My Sunshine" is achingly sad—and consequently beautiful. (AT)

Perishable Records, POB 57-8804, Chicago IL 60657, www.perishablerecords.com

Fleshies – The Game of Fútbol EP, CD

If you're still playing old-school punk in this day and age, you'd better have a sense of humor. Thankfully, the self-described "ugly, loud, perhaps fast, sometimes sweet" Fleshies know this. Big, loud, fast, and goofy is the name of their game—except when the game in question is fútbol. (CR) Adeline Records, 5245 College Ave. #318, Oakland, CA 94618, www.adelinerecords.net

Forty Fives, The – Fight Dirty, CD

Urgent soul rock 'n' roll from Atlanta, the Forty-Fives are dirty blues boogie topped by searing smoky vocals and a B-3 organ. Musically similar to Steppenwolf, the 101ers, or Eddie and the Hot Rods pub rock. A dope record—so how'd it end up here? (GBS) Yep Roc Records, www.yeproc.com

Four Square – When Weeks Were Weekends, CD

This is the music I would expect to hear at a fun college bar or frat party or a musical intro to a TV show on the WB. Do you like Jimmy Eat World? (DM) Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK; or 75 Tenjincho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0808, Japan; or Ductape Records

Franklyn Silver and Oliver Brask – Sorrow Tree, CD

This is ultramopey Casicore. Unrequited love, soft voices on the verge of tears that have a sorta English accent, synthesizer violins. Mountain Goats meets Mogwai. (DAL) Daisy Blu, Frankandoliver@yahoo.com

Free Beer – The Only Beer That Matters, CD

Skate rock, real skate rock. This is the first in a series of releases from Alternative Tentacles that attempts to resurrect some historic bands and give everyone a chance to hear how skate punk got started. Just getting things straight for a few, skate punk sounds nothing like Blink-182. Free Beer was around from 1981-1983 and began with members of Jerry's Kids, Revenge, Anti-L.A., and Innocent Bystander. Songs about drinking and skating have always had a soft place in my heart because of bands inspired by this one. Containing 15 remastered, unreleased, and live tracks, this is a must-listen for everybody

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

THE FIXTURES, *DAINGEROUS MUSIC*. The Fixtures are totally, completely, 100 percent responsible for my getting into punk rock. When my friend Steve and I went to see them at Eagle's in L.A. for the first time, we ended up hanging out on the street with them for hours, doing an interview for our zine. It was right after Jello Biafra got beaten up at Gilman Street in Berkeley, and the Fixtures, who were playing at the time, took Jello to the hospital. I remember trying to be a wise ass and asking Kevin H. (the band's creative force and punk's premier singing drummer) if the mohawk comes off and the business suit comes on when he goes to his job. Man oh man did I get a death stare. "Mohawk stays on," he said. What intelligent, hard-working, funny, generous people the Fixtures are—and what an earth-shaking, kick ass live band. Although I haven't seen them play live in years, I still remember the very distinct chill I got every single time in the few seconds right before they started playing. You just knew they were about to bust out with a classic hardcore scorcher and bring the whole place down. Some of their most melodic, clever, and fully raging songs like "I Survive Today," "Support the Troops," and "Welcome to L.A." are on their first release, *Dangerous Music*. Know Records of Long Beach has released the record along with another early Fixtures release on CD, and it's the perfect starting place to get to know the perfect punk band.

My one and only recommendation this month is the Cometbus *Omnibus*, the big, fat collection of the world's greatest zine that everyone has been waiting for. The best soundtrack for reading this beautiful behemoth cover to cover is probably a random smattering of your favorite old records. Then back to the new stuff next issue.

frenetics, the / goldenboy

young and old. Keep an eye out for the next two in the series: *Los Olvidados* and *Drunk Injuns*, which I believe have already been released. (TK) Alternative Tentacles, POB 419092 San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Frenetics, The – These Mistakes Took Years of Practice, CD

One of the best in the bunch of stuff to review this time around! This Canadian power trio has only been playing for three years, but here they put out a great indie-rock/punk release. Melodic rock arrangements with a mod-type '70s punk influence. (BC) www.unionlabelgroup.com, www.thefrenetics.com

Friction – Hours of Operation, Discography 1991-1994, 2xCD

More than anything, I think this collection shows that Bob Nanna's (Braid, Hey Mercedes) skills have grown considerably. Friction sounded like a more Jawbreaker-esque Braid, and the Braid vocal style is definitely taking root here. Some of it is good, but enduring two CDs worth of "growth" gets old. (KR) Polyvinyl Record Company, POB 1885, Danville, IL 61834-1885, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Friend/Enemy – 10 Songs, CD

A new release from the collective of musicians that formed Cap'n Jazz, Joan of Arc, Owls, Euphone, the list goes on. It's what you would expect from these musicians. Strange, ambient, melodic, chaotic, and inventive. Very impressive. (TK) Perishable Records, POB 57-8804 Chicago, IL 60657-8804

Fuck You Ups – Hope You Appreciate It, Fucker!, CD

Arizona's F.Y.U.'s offer you 16 straight-up-your-butt punk-rock songs on this disc. Loads of attitude, snotty-scratchy vocals and power chords! This is punk as fu...well, it's punk as fuck you ups. (BC) Formula 13, POB 7385 Tempe, AZ 85281, www.formula13.com

Furnace Maintenance – Always On, CD

This CD comes in a red and black holiday stocking, and I instantly thought it was going to be an experimental, arty band that I would hate. Well, I was wrong. This isn't arty. Instead, it's 14 tracks of punk, metal, pop and rock 'n' roll that, mixed all together, sounds like 30 different opening bands I have seen in the past year. (EA)

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr)Dana Morse (DM)

BULLET LAVOLTA EP. Since dirty and gritty rock 'n' roll has made its way back into punk rock, we should pay homage to some of yesteryear's greats. Boston was infamous for producing bands like these that started out punk before turning into really fucking bad metal acts: DYS, SSD, Jerry's Kids, Gang Green, etc. Some not as much as others, but most Boston bands took a turn for the worse, hence Boston keeps returning to the "Back On The Map" ideology. One such band was Bullet LaVolta. These guys completely knew how to rock out with their cocks out (not literally). They couldn't be touched. It was amazing on how quickly they got picked up by a major label to begin their end. It may have been the combination of a vocalist with a sincere snarl in his raspy vocals, the dueling guitars either soloing or making the well-executed crunch or feedback, or the pounding rhythm section. Their self-titled EP (later rereleased *The Gun Didn't Know I Was Loaded*) was the ultimate punk/metal/rock crossover record from Boston. It still gets a bit of play from me, air guitar and all. It's all great, even with the crew backing vocals on "Dead Wrong." If I could convince anyone to track this record down in used bins, I would guarantee that no one would be disappointed. Unless someone gets the later releases, like *Gimme Danger* or the aptly named *Swan Dive* record, there will not be a sad kid out there listening to Bullet LaVolta. Let there be rock!

What do I like this week: McRad, *Discography* (where's my T-shirt, Chuck?), the new Sparta LP, the new DJ Shadow, *Lost City Angels* advance copy (!!!), Beachmont demo, the Subtonix (review this issue) and Motley Crue's book, *The Dirt*. (This shit is too funny to be real.)

Go-Rock Records, www.gorockrecords.com

Ghoti Hook – s/t, CD

Weren't you guys a pop punk band on Tooth & Nail? Well they're putting the fear of God in me with their new sound! This is pretty much straight-up rock. There are definitely some tasty licks on this, but there's still a hint of pop punk in the vocals. Sometimes it gets a little over the top and silly though, like this was meant for friends only. Irony is so dead, dudes. (NS) Velvet Blue, 9121 Atlanta Ave., #237, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.velvetbluemusic.com

Girls Against Boys – You Can't Fight What You Can't See, CD

Why has it taken me so long to be blown away by GVSBB? I've seen them before and always liked them on a noncommittal level, and I was interested to hear this record. But I wasn't expecting how unbelievably good it is. I was entering Springfield, Ill., on a massive drive from Chicago to Houston when I popped it in my CD player and heard the opening notes of "Basstation," track one. The CD had me riveted for the next 40 minutes. It's easily the best "postpunk" record I've heard this year, and it's perfect on just about every level. GVSBB layers D.C.-sounding noisy postpunk without ever skimping on power or intensity. The best way to describe why this record works so well is balance: Everything is balanced. The edgy, dissonant verses that lead to melodic choruses ("BFF," "Basstation," "Tweaker," which almost sounds like Big Black in its verse). The driving bass that puts a solid foundation underneath the occasionally erratic guitars. The production that wraps it up in a slick package but isn't overproduced. The subtle synthesizer arrangements. The drums that keep the beats almost danceable. The vocals that seem heavy with cynicism that retain a certain sensual quality. It's all wrapped up in this bundle of energy that stays strong from start to finish. It all works, and it just blows my mind. *You Can't Fight What You Can't See* is simply amazing. (KR) Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Glass Candy – Love On a Plate, 7"

Catchy rock 'n' roll and pop fusion that will have you singing along in no time. The single "Love On a Plate" is an upbeat, guitar-heavy number with

plenty of hooks and distinct female vocals. The b-side, "Johnny, Are You Queer?" is a fun, midtempo '60s rock piece with hand-claps and more of those damn infectious vocals.

Troubleman Unlimited, 26 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002

GoGoGo Airheart – Exit the UXA, CD

"Oh, hello, and welcome to all-you-can-eat night at the Old San Diego County Buffet. Tonight's specials include punk, disco, dub, and funk. As you can see, that foursome with the kooky haircuts has sampled from our many diverse tastes tonight, choosing to mix it all together for one great danceable taste." (AT)

Gold Standard Laboratories, POB 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Gogol Bordello – Multi Kontra Culti Vs. Irony, CD

This feels like a swarm of gypsies has just surrounded me, and I can't find my wallet. Slavic silliness, and the lead singer sounds like Deuce Bigalow. Welcome to the smiley-faced melting pot of punk rock. (JG) Rubric Records, no address given, www.rubricrecords.com

Golden – Apollo Stars, CD

The prolific Golden return with their fourth full-length of very geeky, proficient, technical rock. This time they seem to be going for a '70s blaxploitation score feel, which they manage to achieve. (AE) National Record Label/Thrill Jockey, POB 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Golden Bats – Too Flash for the Neighborhood, CD

Fairly bad rock that sounds like any combination of late '80s to early '90s progressive rock bands. Definitely what you would expect your local neighborhood bars' Saturday night house band to sound like. Kind of like Elvis Costello with some Green Day riffs. The Blueshammer of alternative rock? (MG) Dr. Wu Records, 1629 Landa St., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.drwurecords.com

Goldenboy – Blue Swan Orchestra, CD

This is a hard one to describe—maybe a modern day vocalist/crooner with rock-lite music, like a poppier Velvet Underground. Singer/songwriter Shon Sullivan has played with Elliott Smith (who appears on the album), Neil Finn and Eric Stefani



(Dixieland Band, No Doubt). This is that same direction as Belle and Sebastian and is really well done. But it's not for me. (DM)
B-Girl Records, 23852 P.C.H. #614 Malibu, CA 90265

Goner – Dollar Movie, CD

There's a lot of hit-or-miss tunes on here. Sometimes I feel John Denver in an indie-rock band with a drum machine. Sometimes I feel Superdrag or Teenage Fanclub. I'm so confused, and I don't like that. (DM)
Eskimo Kiss Records, POB 3603 Wilmington, NC 28406

Gossip, The – Arkansas Heat, CDEP

Yet another fine, powerful disc of female-driven angst from Kill Rock Stars. They have that Seattle "grunge" feel mixed with groovy guitars that would make Jon Spencer smile. The six songs will take you for a pounding ride. (BC)
Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Jared Grabb – On the Inside, CD

This catchy solo-pop debut concept album performed by a member of The Forecast is interesting, memorable and ultimately compelling. Mr. Grabb is quite the crooner. (AE)
Thinker Thought, 1002 Devonshire Rd., Washington, IL 61571, www.thinkerthoughtwrong.com

Greg MacPherson Band, The – Good Times Coming Back Again, CD

Ouch! Bad, rootsy alterna-rock music with a singer/songwriter slant, too much like the Dave Matthews Band and the Counting Crows. Oh, but the lyrics address social and political issues—that doesn't make it good! Destination: MTV. (MG)
The G7 Welcoming Committee, POB 27006, 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Gregor Samsa – Untitled, CD

A little bit of Valium goes a long way. I'm sure they're at the very tip-top of the "endless droning minimalist soundscape" genre, but do people really listen to that? This is what Nietzsche would have denounced as life-denying, to cite another German author. (DAL)
Iodine Recordings, www.iodinerecordings.com

Gunshy, The – To Remember/To Forget, CD

This one's a real head-scratcher. The record is full of quiet, sad, perfectly decent songs. The vocalist, though, delivers everything in a quivering whisper that's impossible to take seriously and hard to listen to. Your songs are good, man, so sing like you've got a pair. (DAL)
Sleep Recordings, www.sleeprecordings.com

Guttermouth – Gusto, CD

Vandals-inspired pop punk from O.C. clowns Guttermouth, *Gusto* is smart-assed, smiley, shiny and just in time for the new school year. A few songs like "Contribution" and "Walk of Shame" have got their old-skool beach punk flavor, but otherwise, Guttermouth are raring for KROQ and likewise "alternative radio" attention. (GBS)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Heatherton Heatwave, The – The Robert Matthew Karp EP, CDEP

The Heatherton Heatwave has a level of formal sophistication. Hardcore mixes with postrock, found sound and white noise. Intricate, geometric guitars are counterposed with harder, even speedmetal, riffs and softer melodic chords, all wrapped in a tight, often bass-heavy, package. High marks. (JS)
Cosmonaut Records, 99 Main St., Nyack, NY 10960, www.cosmonautrecords.com

Hellions, The – Switchblade Rock n Roll, 7"

Loud and heavy rock 'n' roll. Think of Motorhead merged with some of the more harder-edged Weirdos stuff. It causes me to imagine a crowd of biker dudes banging their heads and raising their beers in praise. Typical, but well done. (MG)
Chicken Ranch Records, POB 703, Franklin, TN 37065, www.chickenranchrecords.com

High on Fire – Surrounded By Thieves, CD

Vikings, swords, warlocks, and an invincible army of darkness always make for amusing cover art. Low, heavy, and not too far from Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. (GBS)
Relapse Records, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Mark Steven Hillstrom – In Leaving Fields, CDEP

With *In Leaving Fields*, Mark Steven Hillstrom (formerly of Miner) delivers a pure folk-rock sound. Only five songs deep, the album's length is its only shortcoming. The percussion and acoustic guitar provide all the melody Mark needs as he lets his voice do most of the work. Eerily similar to Davey Von Bohlen's (The Promise Ring), Mark's vocals are soft, rough around the edges and vulnerable. The genius of *In Leaving Fields* is best exemplified on "Painting Windmills" and "Leaving Carolina"—two upbeat, touching songs. (BN)
Erosion Records, POB 701, Appleton, WI 54912

Hiretsukan – Invasive//Exotic, CD

Shrieking metal punk rock that is surprisingly somewhat melodic for being really raw and in your face. Six songs of rage and despair followed by a great cover of Metallica's "Creeping Death." Worth looking into if you dig Submission Hold, Monster X, Born Against and other bands that moms can't get enough of. (DM)
G7 Welcoming Committee Records, POB 27006, C-360 Main St. Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3 Canada

Hissyfits, The – Letters from Frank, CD

Fantastic lo-fi rock 'n' roll with a definite '60s girl-group influence. I dare you to not dance when you hear this! With poppy, syncopated beats underlying their great vocal harmonies, the women of the Hissyfits pull off the rock with style. "Everything will be all right" indeed. (DS)
Top Quality Rock and Roll, POB 1110, Southgate, MI 48195

Ho-Ag – The Meteor Is A Decoy, CD

Noisy, jangly, spastic thud rock. I don't think the Melvins would dig this, but they may think it has promise. What am I doing speaking for the Melvins? (DM)
www.ho-ag.com

Home Team, The – Time and Place, CD

"They all sound the same," announces the first track on this CD. Funny, since this band isn't much different from the dozens of other unintentional tributes to The Get Up Kids. It's bouncy and catchy enough, so if you like emotional power pop, this is for you. (AT)
Rocketstar Recordings, www.rocket-star.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

CONNIE DUNGS, *ETERNAL BAD LUCK CHARM*. I still remember when the first Connie Dungs record hit the streets. While everyone around me announced the second coming of the Ramones, I sat idly by, mildly affected by the juvenile pop-punk silliness. Don't get me wrong; I'm a sucker for well-played pop-punk, but the snotty vocals and three-chord melodies that the Dungs employed were hardly new to me. Sadly, I dismissed them as another Ramones/Queers/Screeching Weasel rip-off and ignored their subsequent work. It wasn't until recently, when I reviewed a record by A Radio With Guts (featuring three of the original Connie Dungs members), that my interest in the band was renewed. I picked up a copy of *Eternal Bad Luck Charm*, the final Connie Dungs LP and the missing link between the Dungs and A Radio With Guts. Having listened to it over and over, I can't help but regret not following the band closer over the years. The progress that they made from their first recording to their farewell album is staggering. The sound that originally did little to attract me grew more robust. There was texture, passion and emotion in the songs. The lyrics changed from juvenile and snotty to well-written—hell, almost poetic. Brandon hides nothing on *Eternal Bad Luck Charm* as he reveals his bouts with suicide, depression, alcohol and tobacco. His voice strained by the cigarettes and burned by the whiskey, Brandon fearlessly brings his demons to the surface. It's nice to sit back and hear a record about a broken heart long before broken hearts were cool. When *Eternal Bad Luck Charm* plays you believe it, you feel it, and you understand its poignant message and the ensuing torment. How many of the current emo-pop bands can you say that about?

Florida trip heavy rotation: Taking Back Sunday, *Tell All Your Friends*; Rancid, *And Out Come The Wolves*; A Radio With Guts, *Beat Heart Sweet Stereo*; The Get Up Kids, *Four Minute Mile*; and the Lawrence Arms, *Apathy & Exhaustion*.

hore hounds / david johansen and the harry smiths

Hore Hounds – No Time For You, 7"

Three track blasters by the ex-frontman of Big Bobby and the Nightcaps. Produced by Steve Baise, it has a great Devil Dogs feel, but it is no copycat band for sure. You definitely get a little mid-'70s rock à la New York Dolls as well. The shining track, "The Ex-Sex Thing," is as catchy as all hell. Hook-laden tracks with rather un-PC lyrics will appeal to all you real rockers. (EA)
Rapid Pulse Records, POB 5075 Milford, CT 06460,
www.undergroundmedicine.com/rapidweb

Hubcap – Hatest Grits, CD

Well, this is a greatest hits collection, complete with bonus live tracks, flyers from over the years on the CD case, and descriptions of the songs and lots of "shout outs." Mostly sludge metal with some interesting instrumental breaks. (DAL)
54-40 or Fight!, www.fiftyfourtyorfight.com

I Can't Control The Dinosaurs – Pre-History, CD

Indie kids delving into electronic/experimental/ambient territory? Guitars, synths and repetitive beats over "electronic soundscapes." I can't tell what is electronically or laptop produced versus what is from a real instrument most of the time. Not incredibly interesting. (MG)
Leedspoint Records, 84B W. Bluebell Ln., Mt Laurel, NJ 08054

I Farm – Two Selected Works, CD

I actually grew to enjoy this band after hearing them played repeatedly at work for the past four months or so. Their sound is all over the place, similar to Dillinger Escape Plan, but with more of a punk edge. The first two tracks actually remind me of an older Liberation Records band called Donuts-N-Glory—the resemblance is almost spooky. This disc combines their *Sincerely, Robots* LP with a split 7", *Learning Russian With I Farm*. Aggressive, catchy punk that can't be pigeon-holed into any specific category. With a new album, *Heaven Radio*, due out soon on Go-Kart, this Brooklyn band gives you a good place to start with this record. (JG)
Traffic Violation Records, POB 772, E. Setauket, NY 11733, www.trafficviolation.com

Iranach / Structure Of Lies – split, CD

For some reason, my cat is enchanted by this split. Is it Iranach's sludgy guitars and guttural, bullfrog-

gy vocals? Or the glassy-throated yelps and mosh-pit metal of *Structure Of Lies*? Maybe he just loves this heavy stuff, and if you dig Brother's Keeper, Bane or Slayer, you will too. (AT)
Deep Six, POB 6911, Burbank, CA, 91510

Iron Sausage – I Toke & I Vote, 7"

You need this hilarious Australian 10-song grind-core 7" in the Sore Throat vein. One of the songs is called "I Might Smell But at Least My Conscious [sic] is Clean." Sidesplitting. (AE)
Deplorable Records, POB 191, Balmain NSW, 2041, AUSTRALIA, www.deplorablerecordings.com

I Catherine Irwin – Cut Yourself A Switch, CD

One of the two lead singer/songwriters with gothic alt-country outfit Freakwater, Irwin's first solo album is one of 2002's best releases. It sounds as great on the first listen as it does on the 50th. The old-timey ache in Irwin's vocal creaks combine with the sweetness and honesty imparted by her affecting timbre. In her twisted, country-dada way, Irwin has the voice of an "everydaughter." Freakwater is known for its tales of love, death and addiction, and these themes continue in Irwin's solo work, with macabre references to the blank eyes of dead loved ones and the burials of young girls. The album's opener, "Needle in the Haystack," is based on a tradition where farmers had to burn down their barns for nails. In her cover of a song that Johnny Paycheck made famous, "The Only Hell My Momma Ever Raised," about a bad-ass criminal, a lady takes over as the bad-ass: Irwin animates the characterization with the heart of a rabble-raising country grrl on her way to the pen, and the wayward son becomes a prodigal daughter. Switch's songs are not under three minutes like Ramones' numbers, nor are they pushing 10 like Led Zepellin or Yes. They tend to run a chewy, chunky four to five, something you can bite into; they're substantial, and there's much to savor in each. Perfect. Besides singing, Irwin plays guitar, banjo and bottleneck guitar, joined by a cast of talented musician friends. All 12 songs are gems. (JS)
Thrill Jockey Records, POB 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Jawbreaker – Etc., CD

FINALLY. Do you have any idea how long nerds like me have been waiting for this 20-song gem? Years, I tell you, years that have felt like a lifetime. Could it possibly live up to the longing we've all endured? Yes. Jawbreaker collects all its compilation tracks, b-sides and unreleased material onto one record, and it has made my year. Although I had hoped against hope that songs like "Elephant," "For Esme" and "Shirt" might make it on here (live versions of the last two appeared on the live record that came out a couple of years ago), this does, however, have just about everything a Jawbreaker fan could want: "Better Half," "Housesitter" (my favorite Jawbreaker song) "Kiss the Bottle," "Caroline." They're all here, and they've brought five unreleased friends: "Peel It the Fuck Down," "First Step," "Friends Back East," "Friendly Fire" and a major-label-budget version of "Boxcar." *New Jawbreaker* songs! They all destroy, especially "First Step." All songs are transcribed inside by Aaron Cometbus with band-member commentary. Oh, it is *so good*. There are also fun band pictures, and in the double-disc vinyl version, reproductions of legal notices and letters the band received. Have you ever wondered just how *good* Jawbreaker was? Listen to this and learn. They did so many things well, from sappy, poppy love songs to angry, dissonant punk—much of it impeccably written and performed. Jawbreaker has been missed these past six years since their breakup, and this posthumous collection gives you a sampling of their greatness—and gives us nerds something new to digest. Buy it. Buy multiple copies to keep in your car, your computer, your house, your portable CD player, your office. (KR)
Blackball Records c/o Revolver USA, 2745 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103,
www.blackballrecords.com

David Johansen and the Harry Smiths – Shaker, CD

What a difference 30 years makes. Three decades ago, David Johansen was dressed in drag and helping to unleash punk rock on the world with the New York Dolls. Nowadays, showing every bit of those 30 years in his weathered face, Johansen is releasing sedate, traditional country blues albums. Has

Reviewer Spotlight: Charlotte Robinson (CR)

IGGY POP, *NEW VALUES*. Iggy Pop's pair of 1977 "comeback" albums with David Bowie, *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*, are always going to be considered his masterpiece, but the tragedy is that his last album of the '70s goes largely ignored. Released in 1979, *New Values* was the first and strongest of three albums Pop recorded for the Arista label. (The others were *Soldier* and *Party*; all three were overlooked on 1996's *Nude & Rude: The Best of Iggy Pop*.) With former Stooges band-mate James Williamson acting as producer and guitarist, Iggy managed to turn out a consistent set that pushed him into more adult territory while retaining his well-honed sense of the bizarre. Some of the songs are what you'd expect from the Iggy of that era: "Girls," "I'm Bored," and the title track are should-be anthems for the bored and disaffected and feature some hot licks from Williamson. But *New Values* is a surprisingly diverse collection. Slowed-down tempos, horns, and backing vocals give songs like "Don't Look Down," "How Do Ya Fix a Broken Part," and "Angel" an air of reflective maturity, while the synth-washed "The Endless Sea" is the most spare, haunting song Pop's ever recorded. And then there's "African Man," which must be heard to be believed. An enormous oddity even for a man who's made a career of being odd, the song features a barrage of politically incorrect, free associative lyrics like "I eat a monkey for breakfast!" and "Go home you dirty white man! I hate you! I hate the white man!" and "I live in the bush! And I'm gonna stomp like a gorilla!" As the *All Music Guide*'s Mark Deming once wrote, "Part of Iggy Pop's unique sort of integrity is that the man doesn't seem to know how to sell out, even when he tries."

Stuff I Keep Listening To: Ladytron, *Light & Magic*; C.O.C.O., *The C.O.C.O. Sound*; Puta-pons, *Return to Zero*.



the fire been extinguished? Hardly—just recontextualized into a new (old) form. Instead of the barn burners of old, Johansen opts for a slow burn. Singing in a low, warbly growl, Johansen makes these old songs (they're almost all traditional numbers written by the likes of Lightnin' Hopkins and Muddy Waters) sound fresh, even while staying true to the original material. Part of the freshness is thanks to the production of the record (recorded live in a church in New York City over three days), but a lot of it can be attributed to Johansen's song selection and performance. You can hear the joy, the playfulness, the excitement in his voice coming out of your speakers. Not a lot of the major players lived through the '70s New York punk scene—Johansen did. This album stands as a testament to survival, the toll it takes, and the joy it brings. (DS) Chesky Records, POB 1268 Radio City Station, NYC NY 10101, www.chesky.com

John Wilkes Kissing Booth, The – A Threat In The Broadcast, CD

They describe themselves as "New American Romance"—hey, whatever blows your dress up. In fact, an amalgamation of their descriptions would be "clumsy...weird...melodic...hypnotic...trapeze artists," but that's a little too interesting. Not as mind-boggling as suggested. (JG) Velvet Blue Music, 9121 Atlanta Ave. #237, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.velvetbluemusic.com

Calvin Johnson – What Was Me, CD

With his ground-breaking 20-year career with Beat Happening and Dub Narcotic Sound System and a voice as deep as Johnny Cash yet smoother than milk chocolate, Calvin Johnson finally puts out his first solo album. It's manly yet twee and reminiscent of the Northwest. I love the lyrically dense "Palriga." (JS) K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.kreccs.com

Kaia – Oregon, CD

One half of the duo that runs Mr. Lady, Kaia Wilson's record is quiet and pretty. Acoustic views of nature from the back porch and midnight scribbles in dog-eared notebooks caught on tape. Includes a great cover of the Cure's "Catch." (GBS) Mr. Lady Recordss, POB 3189, Durham, NC 27715

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

JAWBREAKER, *BIVOUAC*. Now that *Etc.* is out, it's an appropriate time to talk about one of my favorite bands and favorite records ever. Truth be told, I never met a Jawbreaker record I didn't like (yes, that includes *Dear You*), so I wanted to pick something that represented the band at its peak. *Bivouac* won out over *24 Hour Revenge Therapy* because of its impeccably broader scope: poppy (the classic "Chesterfield King"), angry and aggressive ("Parabola," "Face Down"), silly ("You Don't Know," "Pack It Up") and epic ("Bivouac"). The fact that they pull it all off shows just how strong Jawbreaker's core was at the time. Sadly, fans tended to invest too much energy into the cult of singer/guitarist Blake Schwarzenbach, often at the expense of his bandmates: bass player Chris Bauermeister and drummer Adam Pfahler. This phenomenon was especially prevalent in the band's latter days, but Jawbreaker played its best when all three members poured their energy into crafting a melodic, cerebral punk sound that spawned countless imitators. For instance, Bauermeister's bass lines essentially make a few songs on this record ("Face Down," "Parabola," "Bivouac," the closing of "Big"). Pfahler's drumming is relentlessly efficient—busy when it needs to be but never distracting or sloppy. Schwarzenbach's vocals are at the peak of their scratchiness, and his guitar work is at times impressively complex. There are also narrative samples accompanying a few songs ("Bivouac," "Like a Secret," "Donatello")—they're nice touches when used sparingly. Although people often get caught up in Jawbreaker's poppier songs, *Bivouac* showed just how raw and aggressive the band could be. The record, despite its self-indulgent moments ("Pack It Up," "Bivouac"), is a classic. It belongs in the pantheon of great rock records, and it shows us the world of possibilities that exists in punk rock.

In rotation: Jawbreaker, *Etc.*; Wilco, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*; Snapcase, *End Transmission*; Old 97's, *Satellite Rides*; Rocket From The Crypt, *Hot Charity*

Karate – Some Boots, CD

Boston trio that garners frequent comparisons to Codeine and Slint. Their downbeat sound consists of fractured song structures, jagged, arrhythmic bursts of guitar, and fragmented, imagistic lyrics. The result is a sensual, engaging mood piece. (CR) Southern Records, POB 577375, Chicago, IL 60657, www.southern.com

Kepler – Missionless Days, CD

Lurching along the pseudo-alt-country lines like Palace Music or the new Foxtrot-era Wilco, Kepler sound like a melancholy Midwestern fall day with a light drizzle hitting the brown leaves on the pavement. (AS) Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002 USA., www.troublemanunlimited.com

Killed In Action – Exit Wounds, CD

Ultra-violence punk with dual vocals. This seems to be a discography of their material from EPs, seven inches, and comps. There's even a QuickTime computer feature of these guys on the disc. Loud, fast, angry and kind of fun. (DM) Get The Axe Records, POB 3019 Oswego, NY 13126

Killers, The – Manual for Self Destruction, 10"
Undistinguished thrash out of Chicago. Titles like "(Your) Ignorance Is Bliss(ful for the Oligarchs)" sound deep, but it's hard to tell when the message is communicated through throat-shredding screams. There's also a song called "Shitstain," so maybe we're not missing much after all. (CR) Hater of God, POB 666, Troy, NY 12181

Kind Of Like Spitting – Bridges Worth Burning, CD

Man gets with friends and creates songs that are pop in nature but with plenty of personal and emotional twists. My personal favorite was the homosexual come-on of "He Calls Me". (AS) Barsuk Records, POB 22546, Seattle, WA 98122, USA, www.barsuk.com

Koester – The High Highs The Low Lows, CD

Midtempo indie rock with some catchy riffs and a synth. The CD starts out strong but becomes less interesting after the third track. (TK). Pitch-A-Tent Records, POB 655 Athens, GA 30603

La Motta, CD

This is big, thick guitar pop rock that features Sean from the Asexuals and Joey Santiago of the Pixies helping out. It should easily please fans of either Weezer or D-Generation. (AS) La Motta, POB 691381, West Hollywood, CA 90069, www.lamottavshollywood.com

Last Tuesday – Dear Jessica, CD

Poppy punk with an edge similar to the sound that Tooth & Nail helped make popular. Just think of MxPx, Side Walk Slam or Wishing Well, and you pretty much know what Last Tuesday will sound like. Too much of an old thing to hold my attention, but fans of mentioned bands just might dig this. (BN) Dug Records, no contact information provided

Latterman – Turn Up The Punk, We'll Be Singing, CD

This is my favorite release of this issue. Although I've actually gotten a lot of decent metal stuff this month, Latterman is a little more my speed. One of those scrappy young punk bands that you've never heard of, but you should have. They're melodic and fun, but there's a good dose of aggression and passion coming through the music and lyrics. Their sound seems to inhabit that gray area where bands like Hot Water Music, Avail or Dillinger Four also reside: a little too developed to be hardcore and a little too coarse to be pop punk. The dueling guitars crank out intricate build-ups and catchy rhythms while the two vocalists belt out gravelly melodies. Through their music, lyrics and writings, it's apparent that these guys truly care about punk rock and creating something meaningful and worthwhile with it. Now if you'll excuse me, I think I have something in my eye [sniffle]. (NS) Traffic Violation, POB 772, E. Setauket, NY 11733, www.trafficviolation.com

Lesser Of Two – War Circus, CD

There must be more than three people in this band, because the recording on this is so thick and forceful. Hot damn! These local boys, and girl, make me want to scream out "Oaktown 3-5-7, get loose y'all!" This is some gloomy, heavy-ass metal. Something about this gives me the feel of Buzzoven or early COC but with a more updated metal sound. At times they're straight up pulverizing, but they also get jazzy

le tigre / claudia malibu

and chaotic. Even when they're just pounding it out, you can hear all of the instruments clearly coming together instead of just turning into a thick wall of sludge. You can tell that they're talented musicians, and they're probably only in high school or something. I'm always a sucker for a thick bass sound, and the first song delivered right away. A lot of bands like this don't hold my attention too long, but that's a cool-looking stapler. I mean, but this band makes their rage interesting with lots of talent and technique within the realm of hardcore. (NS)
POB 3603, Oakland, CA 94609

Le Tigre – Remix, CD

An interesting project—the women of Le Tigre handed off their songs to a handful of DJs and remixer and let them have at it—but the concept is better than the final product. It's funny how better synthesizers and cleaner production totally changes the nature of Le Tigre's lo-fi dance music. What was fun and exciting now sounds too polished, too perfect. What I love about Le Tigre, both on record and live, are the rough edges, the unpredictable moments, and the feeling that anything could happen. Here it's all rounded corners, and as a result sounds predictable and not nearly as dynamic and alive as on their self-produced albums. Although I suppose if you wanted to slip something subversive into the pocket of a techno fan, they'd probably dig this. (DS)
Mr. Lady POB 3189 Durham NC 27715-3189

Liars – They Threw Us All In A Trench And Stuck A Monument On Top, CD

More Hipster rock coming outta Brooklyn that I want no part of. I can see a slight resemblance to Sonic Youth here, but I just don't like this shit. Go away—to a thrift store or something. (JG)
Blast First/Mute, no address given, www.mute.com

Little Wings – Light Green Leaves, CD

Unorthodox in every sense, *Light Green Leaves* is a scattered collection of indie-folk/country exploration. Something about the fluctuating vocals and the bit askew lyrics remind me of Chris Knox, while the use of various instruments brought to mind David Singer's recent record on Deep Elm. The recording process, what with the multiple instruments, vocals and humming, must have been quite an interesting

experience in itself. Listening to "Uh-Oh (It's Morningtime Again)," I'm vaguely reminded of the new Paul Westerberg album. *Light Green Leaves* is a strong lo-fidelity pop release for fans of nonconformist, experimental singer/songwriter artists. (BN)
K Records, POB 7154, Olympia, WA 98507,
www.kreecs.com

Lo Hi – Say It More, CD

What happens when you take the drummer for Boss Hog, give her a guitar, and throw her up front? You get a girl with a lot of built-up energy. This release is full-on rock 'n' roll with some great organs thrown in. If you like the White Stripes, then you will love this even more. Very stripped down rock with sweet, sexy vocals. (EA)
Tiger Style Records 149 Wooster St., Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10012, www.tigerstylerecords.com

Logh – Every Time a Bell Rings..., CD

Eleven nicely textured and toned moody pop songs from this Swedish band. Great, light guitar work creates an excellent atmosphere throughout the disc, and at times you will think you are sailing the cold, open Nordic Sea. This music is too good to be simply called "emo." (BC)
Deep Elm Records, POB 36939 Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

Los Olvidados – Listen To This!, CD

After 20 years of dormancy, this album is being released as part of the Skate-Punk Reissue Series. While most of us were in kindergarten, in diapers, or in utero, Los Olvidados were making some damned fine melodic, youthful punk. Good stuff along the lines of the Descendents, the Adolescents, and TSOL. (AT)
Alternative Tentacles, POB 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

LoveLostbutnotForgotten – Upon The Right, I Saw A New Misery, CD

Moody and brooding music starts this record leading into the screampunk/crossover category. Very reminiscent of older Ebullition stuff, but this is extremely well done. It goes back and forth between the two styles throughout the record. This is worth checking out. (DM)
HCNL, www.azmythrecording.com

Love Life – Here is Night, Brothers, Here the Birds Burn, CD

People who used to be in bands like the Jaks and Universal Order of Armageddon return with a second full-length. This is dark, moody and arty goth rock very much inspired by the Birthday Party and Siouxsie and the Banshees. Add strings and horns for a strange and scary ride through the depths of evil. (MG)
Jagjaguwar, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.jagjaguwar.com

Low -Trust, CD

While the pretty folk melody of "Snowstorm" and the fuzzed-out rock of "Canada" might make some fans scratch their heads, for the most part, Low doesn't alter its winning formula on its sixth studio effort. Expect haunting male-female harmonies, slow tempos, and melancholy galore. (CR)
Kranky, POB 578743, Chicago, IL 60657,
http://brainwashed.com/kranky

Lucid Nation – Tacoma Ballet, CD

Former Hole drummer Patty Schemel lends direction and a driving rock sensibility to this double disc. Otherwise, the album suffers from too many unformed songs and Tamra Spivey's grating grll-growls. LN tries on more musical hats than most bands but mostly fails. (CR)
Brain Floss Records, 8409 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069

Malfaction – Crush the Dream, CD

The most brutal mix of grindcore, crust, and hardcore ever to come out of Canada. The 23 tracks in 25 minutes pretty much explain what you are getting yourself into when picking this headache-inducing CD. Don't expect Anal Cunt-type lyrics to accompany, either—these are smart, politically minded, and because most of the songs are under a minute, straight to the point. Sort of what you would expect from G7 Welcoming Committee. Sort of. (TK)
G7 Welcoming Committee POB 27006 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg, MB R3C4T3, Canada,
www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Claudia Malibu – Silver Tangerine Hangover, CD

I wasn't sure what to expect when I popped this into my CD player, and, to be honest, I'm still unsure of what to make of it. Spacey pop with unusual

Reviewer Spotlight: George Sanchez (GBS)

THE BLASTERS, S/T. The original Blasters were long gone by the time I entered OC's rockabilly/punk scene. Aside from the occasional Hootenanny reunion, I never saw them in their prime, but their sound, captured in a garage for 1981's *The Blasters*, rereleased five years ago as *American Music* on Hightone, speaks to the sound of Los Angeles, something so few have been able to capture. It's the spirit of East Side Sound: '40s Central Avenue jump blues, '50s doo-wop, and '60s R & B, brought together on dashboard AM radio by Huggy Boy, Art Laboe, and the Real Don Steele. You've got to understand this music never died. It lives in the cracks of every major boulevard, floats on car exhaust, and closes out late-night parties. As plastic as L.A. can be, our music heritage is something that's universal and treasured. The Blasters were essential to the mix of Hollywood's eccentric early punk scene. They threw down their take on oldies without a sense of being outdated. Their music distilled the sound of freeways, forgotten 45s, the urgency of a new form of expression, and the need to just cut loose and dance. It's straight up rock 'n' roll suspended outside of time. The sexy burlesque shimmer of saxmen Lee Allen and Steve Berlin on "I'm Shakin'," the barrelhouse piano blues of "Border Radio," the soulful Phil Alvin, singing from his gut on "No Other Girl," and the forcefully delicate playing of brother Dave on "So Long Baby Goodbye" and "American Music,"—sometimes the feeling and the beat is all that matters. Memories of driving home in the middle of the night, still soaking from the show and the innocence of music that offered an escape from all my worries and invited me in to dance—The Blasters are that for so many of us.

En La Casa: The Blasters, *Testament: the Complete Slash Recordings*, Alejandro Escovedo, *Gravity*, Strike Anywhere, *Change Is A Sound*, Dillinger Four, *Situationist Comedy*.



instrument combinations and quite unique arrangements make for an interesting listen. The subtle use of loops and keyboards and the sugar pop coating brings to mind AM/FM. "I Want To Hear It Again" and "Absolutely Jennifer" highlight this unique release. A bit eccentric and rough around the edges, *Silver Tangerine Hangover* is a daring foray into lo-fi space pop territory with a twist. Not for purists. (BN)

Teardrop Records, POB 3194, Amherst, MA 01004

Manganzoides – Sobredosis de Horror, CD

First international release from crazed Peruvian connoisseurs of '60s-style garage and surf, pairing their 2000 album with new and previously unreleased tracks. I might liken lead singer Rafo to a Spanish-speaking Handsome Dick Manitoba if I knew what the hell he was saying. (CR)

No Fun Records, C.C. 1909, C1000WAT, Buenos Aires, Argentina, www.nofunrecords.com

Mclusky – Mclusky Do Dallas, CD

First U.S. release from British trio, recorded by Steve Albini and containing the best elements of his previous work: abrasive noise coupled with big hooks and clean, no-nonsense production. Like Liars (and Gang of Four before them), Mclusky fuses deep, danceable bass grooves with jagged post-punk guitar and vocal styles. (CR)

Beggars Group, 580 Broadway #1004, New York, NY 10012, www.beggars.com/us

Means, The – Gimme the Creeps, Steve, 7"

Four tracks here, half at 33 and 45 RPM. Punk combined with avant-metal with interesting twists. Nothing to write your Aunt Tilly about. (JG) Roostercow Records, POB 578174, Chicago, IL 60657, www.roostercow.com

9 Mecca Normal – The Family Swan, CD

For some reason, I never listened to Mecca Normal during the whole Riot Grrrl epidemic, even though they seem to be a fairly important band in girl-rock/Kill Rock Stars history. This is probably because I was way more interested in music that really rocked, and Mecca Normal really does not rock that hard. But now that I am gettin' old, I find myself going back to bands like this one and getting more out of them than I ever could have when I was 15 or 16 years old. It's nice to see a fresh new album from the

Mecca Normal duo, especially as they have gone back to their roots by utilizing only one guitar and voice on this album. The songs are simple, folksy guitar pieces underneath Jean Smith's distinctive voice. She tells stories and explores social and personal issues through a cryptic, highly metaphorical poetry-as-lyric style. Mecca Normal seems to be much more like a highly conceptual art-rock project than "just a band," but not in a pretentious way at all. This record is interesting, but it can be difficult to listen to sometimes as Smith's vocals can get irritating (in the tradition of Yoko). Definitely for the fans. (MG)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State, PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

9 Mekons – Oooh, CD

Without a doubt, the best record I've heard all year. The amazing thing about the Mekons is their ability to grow as a band. For 25 years they've been creating incredible records that continually challenge their listeners—and themselves. With *Oooh*, the Mekons take the foundation they laid with 2000's *Journey to the End of the Night* (and of course the foundation they've been laying with albums for the past 25 years) and absolutely get Biblical on its ass. Towering choruses layered on top of rumbling drums and coupled with eastern-influenced guitar lines makes this one of those records that you have to listen to just as loud as you can possibly stand it—and then turn it up just a little louder. While previous Mekons albums have taken their cues from diverse genres like reggae, country, and folk, the biggest influence on *Oooh* is without a doubt gospel and spirituals—both for the sound (they assembled a veritable who's-who of Chicago vocalists to act as a backing choir) and the subject matter. Songs of redemption, rebirth, and religion (in one form or another) fill the record. So where do the Mekons stand with the God thing? The final song "Stonehead" with its chorus of "We lay on our bed/out of our heads" might give away the game. After all, isn't the acronym of "out of our head" OOOH? Not only worth a second listen, but a third, 12th, and 100th. (DS)

Quarterstick Records, POB 25342, Chicago IL 60613

Paul Melancon – Camera Obscura, CD

The accompanying liner notes say that his former band, Radiant City, was voted the "Best Local Alt./Rock Band" in Atlanta in 1997. As a solo artist, he was voted "Best Local Vocalist" in 2000 and 2001. Good for him. This record sucks and would be dissed anywhere else. The days of Matthew Sweet-sounding projects are over unless you are tops in your field. (DM)

Daemon Records, POB 1207 Decatur, GA 30031

Mercury Tilt Switch – Brundle Kid, CD

Nirvana's soft-loud and stop-start dynamics minus the grunge. The British penchant for drama and excess is in evidence (think Radiohead, Coldplay, etc.), but MTS keeps its songs concise, and they pack a hard punch. The result is probably too pristine for the indie crowd and too meandering for the rockers. (CR)

Pet Piranha Records, POB 6848, Dundee, DD1 4YX, U.K., www.mtsonline.co.uk

Microphones, The – Dissected, CD

This is for the noise fan in you, and it's mmm-mmm good. Noisy indie rock that's on more on the moody side of the fence for the morose. Fans of The Microphones won't be disappointed by any means, but expect more of a structured and mellow effort than previous records, if memory serves me correct. (DM)

K Records, Box 7154 Olympia, WA 98507, www.kreecs.com

Midnight Creeps – Punchin' Skanks Live at the Venu, CD

Seven-song live CD from a straight-up rock 'n' roll, female-fronted band. The only track that I liked was a cover of "Love Comes in Spurts" by Richard Hell. I am not sure why they would put out a short live CD; I may have liked a studio version of these songs. (EA)

POB 344 Mansfield, MA 02048-0344, www.midnightcreeps.com

Milemarker – Satanic Versus, CDEP

I don't of anyone who does this methodical, ominous-sounding brand of synth-heavy dissonance better. More subdued than its predecessor (save for the two '80s synth-pop jams), *Satanic Versus* is off-putting at first but grows on you with successive listens. (KR) Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

ARTICLES OF FAITH, *IN THIS LIFE*. So everyone's an expert on "emo" now. "The Promise Ring isn't emo. Rites of Spring is." So says the 18-year-old hardcore genius on the Internet. But there were a lot of good bands from outside D.C. who helped to create a new style, simply by playing passionately and a tad differently from the norm. Articles of Faith were one of those bands. This Chicago band started off playing more of a hardcore style, but after a couple seven inches and an LP, they created one of the best emo albums of all time, *In This Life*. This album was recorded around 1985 and has some similarities to their D.C. counterparts even though Articles of Faith was located in Chicago. Vic Bondi has that rough yet melodic tone shared by Guy from ROS. His lyrics combined emotion, landscapes and politics in a way that few "punk" bands had done before. Musically, they were still a hardcore band, but they had grown by this point, even incorporating some acoustic guitars into the songs. And maybe Bob Mould's production precipitated a better knack for melodies. The song "Nowhere" is definitely on my mental list of Best Songs Of All Time. Oddly enough, upon recent listens to this album, I realized that their dual (sometimes triple) guitar style sounds like a strong influence on a band like Samiam, who wouldn't be too far from a more updated version of this sound. This album is technically out of print, but it will be released on the second CD of a discography on Alternative Tentacles in October. If you're a fan of melodic hardcore or the classic emo sound, pick this up.

Well droopy swingers: new Pavers EP; Fury EP; Jawbreaker *Etc.*; new Peralta; Naked Raygun, *Demohicans*; Your Mum; Pixies *B-Sides*; Fishbone; Sly...

Miles Apart, The – Storyboard, CD

Italian power-pop trio that sings in English, though in such a fast, slurred variety it's hard to follow. The language barrier might also account for awkward lyrics like "Time feels so vast today" and "Do we ever reach the heart of our tide?" It's effective Brit-styled guitar rock nonetheless. (CR) Green Records, Riviera Mugnai 32, 35137 Padova, Italy, www.greenrecords.net

9 Million Time Winner – Paint Me Fine And Free, CD

This six-song EP takes a good couple of turns. It starts out loud and proud on an aggro-pop-punk tip. It then hits you with some really well-written ditties that pull at the heartstrings. MTW then pulls out the rock lite tune with some cool vocal stylings similar to Dave Matthews but in a good way. (Or someone else—you would have to hear it to understand.) They then finish it off with a guitar-heavy piece that's still light and toe-tappingly catchy. I'm really impressed with this band's range. This may be the triumphant return of the power-trio formula. If these guys don't start getting some recognition soon, they will probably be stuck in New Jersey forever. And we've all heard the stories about Jersey, right? (DM) Jerk Records, www.jerkrecords.com

Minks, The – Van Gundy, CD

The hook-filled debut from this Calgary trio recalls the best elements of late '80s and early '90s indie rock, displaying influences like Dinosaur Jr. and the Replacements. A geek and his guitar will never go out of style. (CR) Truth Axis Records, 601 12th Ave. N.E., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 1B2, www.mdaines.com/minksweb

Miracle of 86, The – Kevin Kolankowski, CD

How fucking cool is this? This guy, Kevin K., the namesake for Miracle of 86's record, is just a friend who helped the band out a bunch of times and seems an all-around neat guy, so they named their record after him. Think acoustic Promise Ring with the sparing note use of Robert Smith and vaguely reminiscent of Wilco. (GBS) Immigrant Sun Records, POB 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Andy Slob (AS)

RED KROSS, *BORN INNOCENT*. Sometimes trash can be the most liberating thing. Take for instance this record. It's pure musical innocence run through the punk-rock garbage pail of pop culture behind a record store that just threw out its unsold copies of the New York Dolls' first album. Its fantastic opening track, "Linda Blair," an ode to the star of *The Exorcist*, is a one fine combination of humor, energy, and raw, snot-nosed punk rock. The opening guitars screech and squawk until the vocals come in with the ridiculous lyrics, "In *The Exorcist*, Baby, you was really insane." This song alone is worth the price of admission and has shown up on several different compilations, but there are plenty of other nuggets here too, like, "White Trash," "Burnout," and "Kill Someone You Hate." Nearly every song features crazed guitar playing and solos that would be impossible to duplicate by anyone with any type of talent. This band is tops at playing to that kitsch-culture crowd, and along with Linda, Tatum O'Neal, Charlie Manson, Lita Ford, others get tossed into Redd Kross' crap bucket. I wonder how many people in the big name Hollywood movie scene own this? I'm not one to endorse the purchase of CDs, but the CD version of this on Frontier contains two very crucial and fabulous bonus tracks, both of which I first heard on the *Buried Alive* comp. "Cease To Exist" is a cover version of one of Charlie Manson's finest pieces of work (which the Beach Boys also recorded as "Cease To Resist") and the masterpiece "Notes And Chords Mean Nothing To Me," which details the joys of being limited in the talent department. Oddly, they later learned how to play and became a poorly selling but highly respected pop band.

Stuff that's recently left me slowly dying: Brick Layer Cake, *Whatchamacallit*; all the Venom reissues; Shellac live in Kentucky; and, like everyone else, Jawbreaker, *Etc.*

Moneen – The Theory of Harmonial Value, CD

This is emo rock done in the Jimmy Eat World style: harmonies, chunky guitars, and heart-tugging breakdowns. It sounds capable and competent, but is unfortunately confined to toddler-tantrum lyrics and the genre's musical clichés. Good news: the occasional experiments (seagull-like screeches and off-kilter rhythms) suggest that this band is on its way to something original. (AT) Smallman Records, POB 352, 905 Corydon Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3V3 Canada, www.smallmanrecords.com

My Morning Jacket / Songs: Ohia – split, CDEP

The gushingly depressing music from My Morning Jacket that begins this is described as "sadcore" by the Jade Tree press release, a genre I was completely unaware of. Songs: Ohia finishes the split with one 10-minute-long two-part song, equally as sad. (TK) Jade Tree Records 2310 Keannwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Namelessnumberheadman – When We Leave, We Will Know Where We've Been, CD

A very interesting album. Sad, molasses-like pop music that will have any indie-rock geek in the 20-30s age range rolling over and begging for more. "A trio of multi-instrumentalists" play electro indie (synths, samplers, piano, guitar, drum machines, etc.) a lot like Radiohead. (MG) Urinine Records, POB 413903, Kansas City, MO 64141, www.urinine.com

Naysayer, The – Heaven, Hell, or Houston, CD

I really wanted this to rock out at some point, but it never really seemed to go all the way. *Heaven, Hell, or Houston* is 12 tracks of very finely crafted midtempo song. Reminiscent of something from the Simple Machines catalog, The Naysayer is a female trio that uses a lot of other instruments, such as cello, flute, bells, piano, lap steel and pedal steel guitars. (EA) Carrot Top Records, 935 West Chestnut, Suite LL15, Chicago, IL 60622, www.carrotoprecords.com

Negative Step – Conquering Punk, 10"

The cover artwork involves an ironclad, axe-wielding dude beating down a mohawked fella. It looks like something my high school boyfriend would have drawn. Then, the songs sound almost Born

Against-y (yet alas, not as great) and are about the pitfalls of ruined friendship and group sex. I am so confused. (AT)

Deep Six, POB 6911, Burbank, CA, 91510

Neko Case – Blacklisted, CD

Punk rocker (she drummed for Vancouver bands Cub and Maow) turned country crooner Neko Case slows it down with her third release. While her previous two albums had some amazing fast, upbeat numbers that really showcased Case's amazing voice (goddamn she can belt it out), *Blacklisted* has a slow, lush, almost environmental feel—reverb is stacked on top of reverb, and Case's vocals are seductively whispered. It's a nice change of pace, but to be honest I probably won't listen to this as much as her previous two. (DS) Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Neshamah – In My Heart, CD

WWJD? Well if he was listening to this, he'd fucking mosh, dude! Six songs of decent Christcore that will help you let off some aggression pent up from not being allowed to masturbate. If older Integrity is too blasphemous (and interesting) for you, then seek and you will find. (NS) Angryson, 47 Douglas Ave., Mansfield, OH, 44906, www.angrysonrecords.com

9 1905 – Voice, CD

Wow, I actually like this. Elements of goth, hardcore, metal, and beatnik (to name a few) accompanied by a he-said/she-said/we-said vocal style. At some times god-awful, yet more times pure happiness (in that fucked-up Todd Solondz way). This has the makings of great indie rock. The female vocals are beautiful and stand out against the musical anarchy. It's refreshingly original and played with a sincerity of emotion. There's no slick production here, and the imperfections add to its uniqueness. This disc gets the "pleasant surprise award" out of my batch of reviews. (JG) Exotic Fever Records, POB 297, College Park, MD 20741

Nitrominds – Fire and Gasoline, CD

Snotty Brazilian hardcore that sounds straight out of the mid-'80s. They even do a great job covering



Husker Du's "Something I Learned Today." Highly recommended. (TK)
Deep Six Records, POB 6911 Burbank, CA 91510,
www.deepsixrecords.com

Noahs Dove – S/T, CD

Pretty female voice + influence by Rainer Maria + poppy college rock guitar noodling – required apostrophe to designate possession of dove = songs to play at the end of a "very special" episode of *Seventh Heaven*. (AT)
Thirteeneighteen, 47 Grant St., Easthampton, MA 01027, www.noahsdove.com

9 Nymb – The Breathing Out Vapors Single, CD

The now-defunct Nymb have been a staple of the Chicago indie scene for years and years, and it is sad to see them go. This is a four-song EP that pretty much lies in line with their previous recordings. Nicely instrumented indie rock that goes from really soft and quiet to really loud and hard. The songs are typically slow and sprawling with shoegaze outbursts and smooth, poppy fills. Although this sort of music is usually not my cup of tea (slow rock makes me too sleepy), I've always enjoyed listening to this band. Maybe it's because their songs aren't overly long. This is perfect music to put on before you go to sleep or on a Sunday morning. Lead singer Elaine Doty has a beautiful voice (and writes sweetly melancholic, poetic lyrics to boot) that adds the perfect touch. If you're into bands like Jejeune and Sarge (with less pop emphasis), you will probably like this. (MG)
Forge Again Records, 2109 N. Kenmore #1F, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgeagainrecords.cjb.net

Tara Jane O'Neil – TJO TKO, CD

It's amazing what one woman can do with a guitar and some blip-blop gadgetry. The former Rodan and Retsin member's smooth voice sounds more melancholy than ever, and her songs are slow but quietly intense. Samples, undefinable noises, loops, and sequences make for another morose but fulfilling effort. Perfect for a winter night. (AT)
Mr. Lady Records, www.mrlady.com

Octopus Project, The – Identification Parade, CD

Keyboard-saturated instrumentals combined with electronic beats and live instrument weirdness. It's got a funky beat, and you can almost bug-out to this. Definitely not my thing. (JG)
Peek-A-Boo Industries, POB 49452, Austin, TX 78765, www.peakaboorecords.com

9 Onlinedrawing – Visitor, CD

People freak out about Onlinedrawing. If you go to a New End Original show, chances are you'll hear Jonah fielding plenty of questions about & requests for Onlinedrawing. He's like a thinking man's Dashboard Confessional. Or maybe one for twentysomethings instead of 14-year-olds. Not to belittle Jonah or DC (where's the challenge in that?), but it's the singer/songwriter-guy-with-acoustic-guitar template that's replicated by DC, Kind of Like Spitting, Elliott Smith and legions of other sensitive guys. Thankfully, Onlinedrawing's lyrics tend to be more esoteric—and perhaps refined—than DC's, and many of the songs have stylistic production quirks that add layers to what is typically a minimalist setup. It all lends a certain air of maturity to this record. And, unlike DC's *The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most*, this one will stay in my collection. Even though there's a certain melancholy that hangs over the II songs here, it's by no means morose or obnoxiously emo. The added instrumentation, from piano to slide guitar to the usual percussive elements, provides a complementary sonic texture that really rounds out the songs and spirit behind them. I think you get a real sense of who Jonah is through these songs; they seem a lot more honest than some written by his peers. The vocals occasionally falter, but these songs just work so well. They're catchy, they have a strong emotional potency, their moodiness pulls you in. (KR)
Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

9 Organic – The Life And Times Of Sal Sagev, CD

Scratchy vocals sung in an urgent, guttural growl, similar to Jeff Ott or pre-*Dear You* Blake Schwarzenbach, with enough distance so you can't tell if it's a howl, a moan, or a sob. But in this sonic gray, it's perfect. Organic's singer, like the album, is punchy, raw, and precise. The bass line bounces

in its own direction, at times anchoring the song and taking lead, but otherwise playfully skipping outside the lines, holding down a creative rhythm that dodges in and out of the straight forward 4/4 beat. *The Life And Times Of Sal Sagev* is cloudy in origins (the liner notes don't mention the players and only hint at where the band may be from), which is a tease after hearing such a great collection of songs. From the eerie waltz of "Candles in the Park" to the singalong bliss of "Soma," this is a record that conjures images of early Gilman. The liner notes pose the question, "If a punk band plays in the middle of suburbs and nobody is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" If this is the case with Organic, which I seriously doubt, the crash and boom was just delayed before it rang out loud and clear. (GBS)
Microcosm, POB 14332 Portland, OR 97293

Orthrelm / Touchdown – split, CD

Two bands, four musicians and three instruments is what you get with this split. Orthrelm play metallic hardcore with amazing guitar work and ambient drums while Touchdown follow a more submissive indie-rock route with swirling bass and drum combo. Interesting if somewhat limited in its appeal. (BN)
Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002

Otophobia – s/t, 12"

Super-metal artwork meets chugga-chugga grind-core, but the result is not as scary as one would expect. These guys are angry over jocks, consumerism, and apathetic drunks. For some reason they also dislike button-up shirts. Get this if you like your music raw and angry, and if collars infuriate you, too. (AT)
Deep Six, POB 6911, Burbank, CA, 91510

9 June Panic – Baby's Breadth, CD

Poetic beat-rocker June Panic is a lyrical pied piper, gradually picking up introspective listeners and seducing them. He uses paradigm-challenging whimsy as his charming agent, and it works. Panic returns with *Baby's Breadth*, a relatively slim 14 tunes in five acts. (1996's 78-minute, 28-song *Glory Hole* was based on the 28 categories of ancient Tibetan yogic practices.) Sophisticated yet rootsy, *Breadth* explores epistemology (how we know things) through metaphors—being and having a baby and birthing

Reviewer Spotlight: Jillian Steinberger (JS)

AMERICAN ANALOG SET, *KNOW BY HEART*. A friend said of *Know By Heart*, "It's got a nifty groove, and if I had a make-out partner, I would attempt to make out to it." He was right. Listening to this album, I think of warm caramel on ice cream or a lavender bubble bath on a winter's day. It's an overstatement to call Andrew Kenny ("Ken") a frontman. Really, he's a "frontboy"—"just a boy" fronting a band that's happy to produce flowing music with a positive effect on the endorphins. (But his onstage postman stories are wicked funny.) AmAnSet also cause lightbulbs to go off mentally; vibraphones lend a cerebral touch, together with quirky keyboards—they're a smart band, and melodic guitar lines add mystery. The songs are beautiful and sensual, including the title track ("You are a song for me to sing / a string of verses that goes on and on and on"). My favorite is "The Only One," with its grinding breakdowns and kissable lyrics: "Lucky like a charm / I'm the only one / worn around your heart / I'm the only one." Recorded at home in Austin, this was the best Valentine's Day album of 2001; it's a stiff contender for the decade. Better than a bouquet of flowers, the cover art bears a heart on one side and a noose on the other, created by quarter-inch guitar cords. I've turned several folks onto *Know By Heart* and the band's live shows. It's the easiest sell in the world. They catch on like wildfire in the heart. I love their other albums, particularly *The Golden Band*, and they just put out an EP, *Updates*.

On my carousel: Paulo Braganca, *Amai*; Neko Case, *Blacklisted*; Destroyer, *This Night* (see review); Future Bible Heroes, *Eternal Youth*; Mountain Goats, *Tallahassee*; Radar Bros., *And the Surrounding Mountains*; The Raincoats, s/t; Spoon, *Kill the Moonlight* (see review); The Stooges, *Raw Power*; Yo La Tengo, *Painful*; Gillian Welch, *Time (The Revelator)*.

songs. It's sometimes mirthful, as with Act III, "Our Baby, Faith, Born Prematurely—To the Incubator and Hurry!" Playing like a boho's internal soundtrack, with tripped-out concepts wrapped in tactile melodies, some cuts on *Breadth* are stellar. You can almost step inside the staccato beat and rolling rhythms. The infectious "Housewarming (On Fertile Street)" has unpredictable time signatures, intriguingly accomplished by the rhythm section and Panic's nasal whine—a whine with a wide vocal range, double-tracked on the minor chord. Panic bitterly crashes through the indie crowd's cynicism: "If in the god you loved to hate / but wouldn't believe 'cuz of armor that you need / to 'prove.'" Now there's something to think about (while shaking your ass). Half of the species will appreciate Panic's pop ode to the foreskin, "Giving Up The Ghost," where he entreats, "Don't circumcise your baby!" "Death Is Gonna Part You" is a lovely but sobering dirge, fitting for a wake's custom-mix CD. These are the hallucinogenic psych-pop tunes of a hipster, suede jacket slung over shoulder, shoe-gazing as he walks down the road. It's a strange pop album but in a great way, with many high moments. Those who enjoy Bob Dylan's *Blonde On Blonde*, the work of Bonnie Prince Billy (the artist formerly known as Will Oldham) or Neutral Milk Hotel might enjoy the disingenuous Panic. (JS) Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

John Parish – How Animals Move, CD

One of the intelligent life forms behind 2001's *Souljacker* is the fellow who composed *How Animals Move*, 13 compositions that vary tremendously from sweet violin solos to tape-looped field recordings (about a sexy English girl named Bernadette) backed by fast, intricate and melodic guitarwork. The album was recorded all over, from Bristol to Laurel Canyon in L.A., from 1997 to 2001, with many distinguished musicians (Giant Sand's Howe Gelb on piano and the wisened vocals of Does de Wolf on "Shrunken Man"). One thing I really like about the album is that, despite the artist denying intentionality in an interview, a close listener dredges up multiple layers of meaning. For instance, take the CD's name: The cover art shows a picture of Parish sitting with his young daughter, Honor, at the Museum of Natural History in New York, looking at a stuffed bear display in the dark. Get it? Those bears aren't going anywhere. Parish

denies irony, but it's hard to ignore. Another, even more intriguing, example: Parish began his career 20 years ago with PJ Harvey in a punk band called Automatic Dlamini. They've remained friends and associates since; he produced and played on her groundbreaking album, *To Bring You My Love*. Harvey added strong, gutsy vocals and "that ineffable something" to Animals' final track, a hot cover of Helen Hume's 1940s hit "Airplane Blues." A wild song, it describes how human animals move. Our brains let us fly up to the sky ("he takes me flying, flying right up to the sky") yet we're as corporeal as any other species ("first he turns me over / then he starts to loop-de-loop"). The song showcases Harvey's amazing vocal talent; she bests Bessie Smith. *Animals*, which starts out with a whisper, goes out with an unexpected bang. (JS) Thrill Jockey, POB 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Pax 217 – Engage, CD

I don't like this overproduced piece of crappy party rock crossed with hip hop and African sounds. I like the African sounds part OK. The party rock bits have to go. (JS) Forefront Records, 230 Franklin Road, Bldg. 2, 1st Floor, Franklin TN 37064, www.forefrontrecords.com

Penelope – Face Au Silence Du Monde, CD

This up-and-coming Canadian outfit has a sound that lies somewhere in between Face to Face and Leatherface, only their vocals are in French. I really like this CD, though I have no idea what they are singing. *Face Au Silence Du Monde* was produced by Dave Smalley, (Dag Nasty, All) at Inner Ear Studios in D.C. and features Brian Baker (Dag Nasty, Bad Religion, Minor Threat) on three of the tracks. For me, this CD just doesn't get old. (TK) The Union Local 2112, www.unionlabelgroup.com

Pere Ubu – St. Arkansas, CD

You don't have to be 14 years old with fake tits to be a rock star—you can be David Thomas. After more than 25 years together, this fabled group has released its 18th studio album, and it's really, really good because they're really, really talented and smart. It pleases. *St. Arkansas* does a lot of things, and one of them is rock. Track two, "Slow Walking Daddy" is weird, creepy and funny ("I wear a suit / and honey I wear a tie / yeah, yeah, yeah"—sung, mind you, in Thomas' eccentric falsetto croak).

Track four, "333," is my favorite; it's speedy and garagey with tempo changes that make me want to go-go in an eyeball outfit. I've relistened to the first second (I timed it) of this song many times. It opens with a blood-stirring drum roll and sounds like they spliced off the first split second when they edited the (analog) tape. It starts so clean, a drum roll in *medias res*. I'm telling you it's a drug in the form of music. Then, the same song has a stop-start that is *tres fantastique*. It's at about 2:36. I wait for it on pins and needles every time "333" comes on. Then, funny, "333" shows Ubu's intellectual range by ending with delicate, contemplative, trebly guitar, a contrast. Amazing "Hell" at track five follows. *St. Arkansas* should be a permanent fixture on any self-respecting rock or punk collector's shelf. (JS) Cooking Vinyl/spinART, POB 1798, New York, NY 10156-1798, www.spinartrecords.com

Phobia – Serenity Through Pain, LP

Convincing thrash metal with a social conscience. Churlish vocals rail against discrimination, organized religion, the government, and political correctness. Not for the faint of heart or conservative—or maybe even the liberal, for that matter. (CR) Deep Six Records, POB 14815, Fremont, CA 91510-6911, www.deepsixrecords.com

Piedmont – Charisma, CD

My first reaction to this disc was a hearty "HA!" Synthesizer-heavy and extremely Devo-esque, this band was blinded by science about 20 years ago. After thorough examination, my conclusion is that they are at least half-retarded. (JG) Slave, POB 10093, Greensboro, NC 27404, www.slavemagazine.com

Pillar – Everyone Is As Terrified As You Are, CD

Some might call this "angular" rock. I'll throw out Jehu as a reference, 'cause I'm a lazy journalist. A little rockin', a little spazzy, a little speedy, a little arty. But it all adds up to something good that I can't quite describe using my feeble mind. Just buy this or go see them and quit making my head hurt. (NS) 2059 Princess St., Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4T 3Z5

Pits, The – Belief in Ruins, 7"

Two song flipper from a total late-'70s-sounding outfit from England. It is easy to hear the influences, and the singer has Johnny Rotten's snarl but

Reviewer Spotlight: Miss Annie Tomlin (AT)

MY BLOODY VALENTINE, *LOVELESS*. How can something called *Loveless* be anything but? By now, the stories behind My Bloody Valentine's final release are legendary: Kevin Shields' obsessive perfectionism, the innovative layers upon layers of guitar tracks, the record's exorbitant budget, and the rumors that Shields might someday write another song. With all these tiny legends, it could be tempting to forget the music itself. Tempting, but impossible. From the heady guitar flood of "Only Shallow," it's obvious that the music of *Loveless* sounded like nothing before—and despite legions of imitators, it sounds like nothing since. It effectively defined shoegaze, introduced tremelo to eager listeners, slipped vocals low into the mix, and pushed a wall of sound until ears bled. Even a decade after its release, the record doesn't seem dated; it sounds lush, full, and sublime. This is the soundtrack of obsessive love and sleepless dreams, of twisted sheets and the most beautiful kind of noise you've never imagined before. "Someday" is as beautiful as lovelorn depression can be, its quiet vocals retreating behind low guitars and a floating melody. Possibly the finest seven minutes of pop of the past 10 years, "Soon" foregoes fancy gadgetry for an organic, guitar-based dance song. If the daze of "To Here Knows When" is the musical equivalent of spending a Sunday in bed, then the polished sweetness of "When You Sleep" is peeking through hair over lashes and finding fluttering eyes on the other side. Shimmering, fuzzy, gorgeous and essential, *Loveless* is timeless.

Latest Obsessions: The Shivering, *Wires of Storm and Song*; Ikara Colt; Serge Gainsbourg & Anna Karina "Roller Girl"



not the same delivery. Great stuff to sing along and party with. All fans of 999, Sex Pistols, Chelsea, Slaughter and the Dogs, etc., need to pick this single up. (EA)

Rapid Pulse Records, POB 5075 Milford, CT 06460, www.undergroundmedicine.com/rapidweb

Polkadot Chokealot – Initiating the Pulse, CD

Transvestite robots from outer space are taking over the Portland Music scene! This is a self-proclaimed feminist electronic fusion of hip hop and punk rock, parodying pop culture and its soundtrack. The influences (Bikini Kill, Peaches, Li'l Kim) are apparent in their music and lyrics. I gathered from the silly pictures included with the CD that they are a band to see live. Since I just moved here, I am looking forward to seeing them. (TK)

PolkadotChokealot@hotmail.com

♀ Poulain – With Fingers Crossed, CDEP

A very warm recording captures four songs that leave the romantic in you spinning through the kitchen with that special someone on a lonely Saturday night. Poulain take a liberal use of nursery-rhyme familiarity and craft it into a pleasing pop sensation that should appeal to Belle & Sebastian fans. This is no punk rock, but still it hints at a time when special things happen between two people, whether for a moment or a lifetime, leaving both with memories of the smallest detail. It appears that Poulain is the idea of just one man, but the songs are fleshed out with competent musicianship and the quivering background vocals of a female friend. So if lyrics like "my fingers are crossed with birthday cake wishes/thinking of you and butterfly kisses" sound appealing to you, go get this. If not, stick with Discharge. Wonder if this band can pull off an entire album. (AS)

Soft Serve Records, www.poulainmusic.com

Prosperity Wallet – Electric Noose, CDEP

Stupid name, pretty good postpunk screamo. If I had to describe this disc on looks alone, it would have to be UGLY. A turd in a jewel case—but listenable. (JG)

Grey Flight Records, POB 720595, San Jose, CA

95172, www.greyflight.com

Punchbuggy – The Great Divide, CD

Canadian pop-punk revival full-length from a band that used to be all over the place. Reminds me of the quality '90s band Schleprock, only with punchier guitars. (AE)

Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

♀ Pupils, The – s/t, CD

This is the way to do it, kids. Dan and Asa from Lungfish make a minimalist pop album with only the most basic use of instruments and what also appears to be limited talent. But they end up with a really cool and dark-sounding album. The lyrics have a nice twisted sensibility, which is very reminiscent of Syd Barrett's solo work, and are delivered in a serious tone that somehow reminded me of Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson. The music is incredibly sparse and simplistic. The only comparison I could make would be to Brick Layer Cake,

but very few people have even heard them. A lot of the music on this sounds almost as if the guitar players have only owned their instruments for a couple of weeks, but in no way is this thing sloppy. Actually it's very relaxing not to hear some band overcomplicate things with a ton of chord changes. I've never really listened to Lungfish, but from what I remember hearing, it didn't sound anything like this. And to the fans of that band, no, they have not broken up. So now I command all whiny singer songwriters out there to pick this up and see what amazing things can be done with just a few mics and some interesting words. Hats off to The Pupils. It's time for them to do the schooling now. (AS)

Dischord, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC

20007, www.dischord.com

Quails, The – Atmosphere, CD

Ex-Circus Lupus, Electrolettes and Cha Cha Cabaret. They sound a lot like Sleater-Kinney, but they betray a wide range of influences: New Order, the Smiths, the Nation of Ulysses, and X-Ray Spex. There's a lot of potential here, but I think they need to hone their own sound to become distinct. (DAL)

Inconvenient Recordings, www.thequails.com

Quix ♀ O ♀ Tic – Mortal Mirror, CD

Talk about transcending genres. Quix*O*Tic brings together distinctly varied styles including electronica, goth, indie-rock and soul to deliver a decidedly dark, almost depressed sound to the masses. The dual, interchanging vocals delivered by sisters Christina and Mira Billotte and obscure melodies provide haunted, lingering layers of morose sound. Rounded out with clean, precise guitars, Quix*O*Tic manage to combine distant, unrelated genres into a tightly packed whole. Aside from nine originals, *Mortal Mirror* also includes covers of Billy Stuart's "Sitting In the Park," Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is," and Black Sabbath's "Lord of this World." (BN)

Kill Rock Stars, POB 418, 120 Nestate Ave.,

Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Rancid Vat – The Cheesesteak Years, CD

I knew Rancid Vat were pretty well established, but jeez, I had no idea they started in 1981. They wear funny hats, have lots of tattoos and play rip-roaring, muscular rawk and roll about drinkin' beer, gettin' into fights and livin' in the city. The city in this case, is Philly. The band started in Portland, now a Rancid Vat variation lingers on in Texas, but this is a collection of their glory years in Philadelphia, the meat of the Rancid Vat geographic sandwich. Mmm. (DAL)

Steel Cage Records, www.steelcagerecords.com

Radar Brothers – And the Surrounding Mountains, CD

Sad yet uplifting, this is down-home-on-the-wide-open-prairie alt-country-sounding rock. And not in a terrible Wilco sort of way. Surprisingly, I like this a lot. (MG)

Merge Records, POB 1235 Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

polkadot chokealot / returnables, the

♀ Randy – Theater, CD

Small Canadian label puts out a 13-minute EP from a band I know as a big-label outfit. I'm not rushing to check it out. It even collects a bit of dust on my desk. With reviews almost due, I plop it in and listen. And sure as shit, it's a brilliant, unique blast of garagey craziness. Fans of garage sounds need to make sure not to overlook this deceptively marketed band. This is driving, manic garage with fab pseudo lo-fi production and glamorous European distorted vocals. The lyrics do the trick as well, with the band's anarchist politics extending to them engaging in freeform comedy: "He didn't believe me when I called in sick/he sounded pretty angry and he hung up quick." I fear that the fact that this essential Swedish garage-punk band is on a very big label (Epitaph, I believe) will keep many people that would love them from checking them out. I hadn't heard them 'til I got this in my box. Who else are the big guys putting out these days? Fuck, this rules! (AE)

G7 Welcoming Committee, POB 27006, C-360

Main St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, CANADA,

www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Rattlesnakes, The – I Explosion, CD

Fast, explosive punk with the heavy edge that fits well with the Swedish hard-rock invasion of the past few years. Drummers often make or break bands, and in this case, the drummer and his rolls make the music stay driving. The huge fold-out Digipack with a the lyrics make this a plus. (EA)

Local Host Records, www.therattlesnakes.com

Reno Divorce – Naysayers and Yesmen, CD

This is Denver's very good final answer to Social Distortion. Big guitars and greased back hair, plain and simple good rock songs. I hope they don't mind the Social D. comparison, but they do sound a hell of a lot like them. (BC)

Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK www.bosstuneage.com

Restraints, The – s/t, CD

History in a box, this reissued 1980 eight-song demo of Atlanta's first punk band was thought lost after frontman Chris Wood's death. (He died in prison.) Recently found and remastered on CD, the songs are fast, raw and nasty. Hilarious, too. "I Cannot Be A Nun" is the opener. Buy this. (JS)

Scarred Records, www.therestraints.com

♀ Returnables, The – Unrequited Hits, CD

This CD's cover caught my eye. It has a couple of 7" boxes opened with a Returnables single pulled out. What I noticed was the two records in the front of each box: The Registrars *TV Hell* and the Ramones great Norton single. (I also think I can see the first Buzzcocks single.) They have the right bands to draw from, but does it live up? Each track pulls out a great Buzzcocks flavor, and I am sure that the members of The Returnables must own a few Elvis Costello records. I am sucker for bass lines that walk all over the place and toms that pound in the chorus. I have a feeling I will really like this a lot after I have listened to it repeatedly. No fast tracks on this one, but there are lots of singalong choruses with all members

adding vocals. The production is layered with extra pieces here and there that add enough to get them out of the generic cut-out bin. (EA)
Jettison Music, 6008 S. Harlem Ave., Summit, IL 60501, www.geocities.com/thereturnables

Rockefeller Horsecollar – Other Scent Of The Walleye, CD

This rock band doesn't sound half bad. In fact, I like them a little bit sometimes. They play a kind of bluesy, psychedelic hard rock, sort of midcareer Beatles mixed with Led Zepellin, plus hardcore vocals. I'm sensing a Silver Jews vibe. Maybe it's just the name. (JS)
rhorsecollar@hotmail.com

Rockets Red Glare – s/t, CD

This Canadian trio so intricately intertwines guitar, bass, and drum lines that no single instrument dominates. The result is a lazy, lilting series of sound paintings. Lyrics are few and oblique. (CR)
Sickroom Records, POB 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Ruins – 1986-1992, CD

Some things are better left forgotten. Such is the case with this collection of rare and out-of-print recordings from the first seven years of Ruins' existence. The unusual fusion of noise, prog rock and even metal mixed with crazed vocals is the Ruins' calling card. I understand the band has quite a devout base of followers who should find this record a nice collector's item. Those unfamiliar with the band would be better off checking out one of the more recent LPs. (BN)
Skin Graft Records, POB 257546, Chicago, IL 60625 www.skingraftrecords.com

Rum Diary, The – s/t, 7"

This is nice-boy rock with farfisa, moogs, and quieter guitars. Straightforward, tinkly-dinky indie rock with bursts of pop make for music that's nice enough for when the snow falls down. (AT)
Springman Records, POB 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015, www.springmanrecords.com

Safety In Numbers – Build and Structure, CD

More standard, whiny, poppy emo rock. I guess this features members of Hot Rod Circuit and the New Amsterdams, so that'll tell you what this sounds like. At least it's short and quick with 10 songs under 28 minutes. (MG)
Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., PMB 457, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrown-records.com

Saltwater Vampires-S/T, CD

Snotty three-chord pop-punk a la the Riverdales, the Queers, and Screeching Weasel. Hmm, I wonder what the common thread is? Songs about girls, broken hearts, and...love. (GBS)
Great Western Record Recorders, Tolon, IL, saltwatervampires@hotmail.com

♫ Savage Republic – Complete Studio Set, 4xCD

Whether or not you're familiar with Savage Republic, these reissues are essential additions to your collection. Containing 52 tracks, the four

records amass every studio track recorded between 1982 and 1989 as well as songs from EPs, singles and compilations. The set comes with four CDs each in its own cardboard wrap-around sleeve jacket that was lovingly designed by former Savage Republic member Bruce Licher and hand letter-pressed. Savage Republic was, for the most part, a guitar-driven instrumental band. Vocals did make an appearance here and there, but ultimately it was the percussion-heavy sound and the swirling guitars that made the band. Based on traditional Greek and Turkish music, the songs have an underlying pattern, but they remain largely free-form. Slowly built up on the strength of the guitars, the tracks often erupt with unpredictable fury. Delicately postpunk, these records serve as a history lesson to all of us that weren't there when the underground rock scene erupted. (BN)
Mobilization Recordings, POB 460951, San Francisco, CA 94146, www.mobilization.com

♫ Sciflyer – Melt, CD

You have to be pretty serious to have recommended bass and treble settings for your EP (in this case, it's a little bit of bass and a little more treble). These proud purveyors of "space rock" call their music "mid-fi." It's different, and it works, and it even hits some grooves of deep perfection that make you wanna play the track again. From this promising sample of their work, I'd be curious what they come out with next. They could become the defining space-rock band. The EP finishes up with an ambient version of Husker Du's "Powerline" that was pretty pleasing to the ears of this picky HD die-hard. Well done. (DAL)
www.sciflyeronline.tripod.com

Segue – s/t, 7"

Thrashing, screamy hardcore with some slightly melodic parts and lyrics about conformity within this well-oiled machine called America. Like His Hero is Gone mixed with some screamo stylings, and I don't mean that in a bad way. (MG)
Primary Thoughts, POB 4995, Portland, OR 97208-4995, www.primarythoughts.com

Senor Droolcup – High Standards Of Low Quality, CD

Hardly original, *High Standards Of Low Quality* is a collection of humorous songs about girls and drinking that nevertheless manages to stand out in this crowded genre due to the musical talents on display. I am vaguely reminded of 5¢ Deposit, Smackin' Isaiah and even some Screeching Weasel. File this under "worth keeping an eye on." (BN)
Senor Droolcup, tonyp1138@msn.com

♫ 78RPM – Pulsator, CD

I absolutely love albums that come out of nowhere and completely blow me away. Such is the case with this shiny piece of plastic from Shrunkn Head Records. Imagine the Briefs with a synthesizer and Devo on their mind, and you'll know what I mean when I say this is highly infectious stuff. Punk guitars, new wave synth, upbeat tunes and vocals that fall right between snotty punk and 1980s new wave. Within minutes of playing this, I was hopping

around like an idiot with a stupid silly grin on my face. "Ignored," "The Sweep," "Structure" and the cover of "Walking Out On Love" will all have a similar effect on anyone that gives 78RPM a chance. There's also a bonus video of "Diggin' For You" for those with a PC or MAC. (BN)
Shrunkn Head Records, POB 23431, Oakland, CA 94623, www.shrunknheadrecords.com

Shank – Coded Messages In Slowed Down Songs, 12"

Trashy hardcore noise that is definitely not for the faint of heart. With 21 cuts, even the hardcore grind fan may find this a bit nauseating. Screamed vocals, brutal guitars and nosebleed-inducing drumming, which is the norm with trashcore bands. (BN)
Deep Six Records, POB 6911, Burbank, CA 91510, www.deepsixrecords.com;
Six Two Five Trashcore, POB 423413, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.625trash.com

Shooter McGavin – Shooter McGavin, 7"

This melodic rock 7" with a U2 influence is on one-sided colored vinyl. Solid, bouncy and very European. (AE)
Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Silkworm – Italian Platinum, CD

One could describe this as stoner-rock, arena rock, new wave, or folksy indie rock. There's tons of great guitar work here, reminiscent of J. Mascis. The lyrics are a little goofy, and so is the singer's style, but it kind of works. Pretty good if you're into this sort of thing. (JG)
Touch & Go Records, POB 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

♫ Matt Skiba / Kevin Seconds – split, CD

You all should be familiar with Alkaline Trio and 7 Seconds by now. The former being the current kings of dark pop punk and the latter being one of the forefathers of melodic hardcore. On this disc, we have the singers of each band doing five acoustic songs of their own. Matt Skiba starts things off, sounding pretty much like mellower Alkaline Trio, minus the distortion. I've never been the biggest fan of theirs, but I think these songs have finally won me over. Maybe it's the fact that he took a style used by some really shitty bands (Dashboard *cough*) and actually made it sound interesting. Although there is bass and drums on most of his songs, this is really stripped down. The result is a cool contrast between his pleasant voice and his somber lyrics. He ends his half with a fine cover of 7 Seconds' "Soul To Keep." Good stuff. Now on to Kevin Seconds. Let me preface this by saying 7 Seconds is one of my favorite bands. But I haven't really liked Kevin's stuff following *Soulforce Revolution* (or *Drop Acid*). He's done a lot more poppy work like this since those days, and his voice almost sounds younger now than back in the day—which might be a good thing, but it sounds strange to me. Maybe this is just meant for a different or newer audience. I'm probably just so familiar with his older stuff that I'm being stubborn. I mean, the songs are decent in their own right, but I think Matt's cover shows me that nostalgia wins out sometimes. Regress, OK? (NS)
Asian Man, POB 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030



skinless / stryder, the

Skinless – s/t, 7"

Killer, double-kick-drum metal. The packaging rocks too. Skinless has a release on Relapse and has a picture disc on its way on Hater of God. If metal is your thing, this is a band to hear. (TK) Hater Of God, POB 666 Troy, NY 12181-666 www.4skinless.com

☿ Sleater-Kinney – One Beat, CD

Wow. Sleater-Kinney has been one of my favorite bands since *Call the Doctor*. One of the reasons is their stripped-down approach to their music. This album blows that out of the water. With fuller instrumentation, backing vocals, and glistening production that fills every inch of the record, *One Beat* sounds like nothing S-K has released before—and it sounds amazing. Absolutely full to the point of overflow, there is so much to hear under Corin Tucker's soaring voice and Carrie Brownstein's understated counterpoint vocals. It's almost hard to concentrate on what is usually S-K's most outstanding feature. But thankfully, Corin and Carrie's interplay is able to withstand the wall of sound happening beneath them to reveal some of the band's most personal (and surprisingly political) lyrics. The result is an album that sounds familiar and not at all "Sleater-Kinney discovers synthesizers" while still sounding new, fresh, and exciting. And have I mentioned how fantastic a drummer Janet Weiss is? Goddamn right. Once again, Sleater-Kinney offers up the total package. (DS) Kill Rock Stars 120 NE State Ave. #418 Olympia WA 98501

Spacehead – Low Pressure, CD

This electronic form of acid jazz is very spacey and velvety. The layer of drums combined with horns and an array of electronic effects is done well but lacks luster. However, if you dig the whole smart, jazzy, electronic thing, who knows, you may enjoy this. However, one would probably be reading *Mix Mag* or *DJ* to find a good review of this release. (DM) Merge Records, POB 1245 Chapel Hill, NC 27514

☿ Spider Virus – Radio Invaders, CD

Any (and I mean *any*) band that can rock up Rod Stewart's "Young Turks" has to be one of the better things happening right now. This is rump-shaking punk rock 'n' roll. It is a shame so many punks never take the time to put the "rock" back into "punk rock." And we all know that rock came from people having nasty sex to jazz and blues music or something like that. Anyway, you have to be able to shake your ass to it if you want it to be good, and Spider Virus got my perfect sexy ass a-moving! In some odd way, Spider Virus sounds to me like an updated version of early Urge Overkill. How's that for a comparison! The last three songs were recorded on an eight track, for those studio buffs out there. They cover a lot of musical emotions on this 15-track disc, but in covering much musical turf, they never lose focus of the driving force of rock. So your jaded self will stay interested in this music even after you probably have heard a lot of

crap on MTV and "alternative" radio. This is the stuff you should be listening to. Heavy guitar, cool vocals and ass-shaking rhythms. (BC) Offtime Records, POB 479176, Chicago, IL 60647, www.offtime.com

Spitvalves – Moving On, CD

It's been awhile since a ska record has come my way through PP. (They call themselves a "punk band with horns.") The horns and the rhythm section work together pretty seamlessly. At times they sound like the Voodoo Glow Skulls, but they're more upbeat, and their harmonies are more anthemic. I dig this. It makes me nostalgic for the mid-'90s. (DAL) Resurrection A.D., www.resurrection-ad.com

Spoon – A Series Of Sneaks, CD

Critics have called *Sneaks* (reissued here) an all-time Top 50 album and Britt Daniel one of rock's great guitarists. I agree. He's a damn good bassist, too. Now a young, unrecognized Texan, when he's an old rock star, I hope after, like, his 25th album, he doesn't record any crap. (Just teasin'.) (JS) Merge Records, POB 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 25714, www.mergerecords.com,

☿ Spoon – Kill The Moonlight, CD

Before there was punk or indie, there was rock, and that was plenty revolutionary when Little Richard hit the scene. The best of the rock tradition—Chuck Berry, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Iggy Pop—comes together with Spoon. *Kill The Moonlight* is about the push-pull of restraint versus release: breaking free of working class stasis, negotiating the thrilling dangers of romantic relationships (or just sex), bursting through the repression of one's own creativity, and dancing instead of standing stiffly. Talented bandleader Britt Daniel's controlled intensity and personal magnetism draw you in like Iggy, but he's elegant. The rhythm section gets the highest marks: Clever drummer Jim Eno provides the style and backbone for a sound reminiscent of what Tony and Hunt Sales did for Pop on his classic solo effort, *Lust For Life* (1977). With bold lyrics, "The Way We Get By" is a high-spirited song about kids living on the edge. It references the Stooges' famous second and third albums, *Fun House* (1970) and *Raw Power* (1973), as well as *Lust For Life*, adding depth and history. "Something to Look Forward To" is one of rock's top 10 sexiest songs ever and may even betray the inner workings of the male mind at its most rakishly gentleman-like. About an aggressive bully, the speedy "Jonathan Fisk" follows the boy-girl intensity of "Something to Look Forward To" and mirrors it with its own boy-boy intensity ("Jonathan Fisk speaks with his fists"). The opening riff sounds like a Chuck Berry reference. The highly danceable, super-catchy "You Gotta Feel It" rejoices in right-brained thinking. *Moonlight*, which grows more and more likeable with repeated listens (I'm calling it "stale-proof") is Spoon's finest effort yet, topping *Girls Can Tell* and even *A Series Of Sneaks*. Own this, play this. (JS) Merge Records, POB 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 25714, www.mergerecords.com

Spoon – Someonesomething, 7"

Straight-up, toe-tappin', finger-snappin' indie pop full of jagged guitars, upbeat keyboard parts and lounge-type vocals. Definitely what is expected on a Merge Records release. Calls to mind The Walkmen, Jonathon Richman and even the Strokes. (MG) Merge Records, POB 1235 Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Standard, The – August, CD

Quiet to loud, acoustic Northwest rock to keyboard-driven postrock, to atmospheric, ballady piano, with no drums to rock drums to quiet breakbeats, with vibrato male vocals. Some listeners will enjoy this band and its songs. A nicely produced album. (JS) Touch and Go, POB 25520, Chicago, IL 60625

Stereo, The – Rewind+Record

Straight-up pop that's about as radio-friendly as it gets. I suppose you call this power pop ("Tell Your Football Dad No!"), but it's heavy on the pop side to the point of cheesiness ("Stop Breathing"). It's totally theme music for next summer's "teen movie." (KR) Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

☿ Strike Anywhere – Underground Europe 2001 Genoa Benefit EP, 7"

Bands with a message that don't lose sight of the music are few and far between. Let's face it, Anti-Flag's music is boring. When songs become replaced with slogans, the skill of lyricism becomes decidedly less complicated. Musically exciting and philosophically engaging, Strike Anywhere don't fall into this trap. Wasting hardly a note, this Richmond, Va., group has a flair for great harmonies and an incredible sense of time while simultaneously conveying a message. Slightly reminiscent of Avail's heavy, no-holds-barred rhythmic sense, AFI's guitar theatrics and At the Drive-In's awkwardly fluid time changes, this EP is Strike Anywhere's hard-to-find 1999 demo. But other than flat vocals and occasionally uneven mixing, you'd hardly realize that. "Sunspotting" is anchored by a familiar detuned snare and a pounding rhythm that's offset by delayed guitar shuffles during the verses. "Chorus of One" is the most melodic track, but all four songs are phenomenal. The music of Strike Anywhere is layered, complex and deliberately woven from different strands of rhythm. One sign of practicing what they preach: A portion of the proceeds go to lawyers in Berlin working on behalf of Genoa activists still imprisoned for their direct action at last summer's G-8 summit. Scratchy in the right places and a little rough, but the music and the message maintain where others couldn't imagine. (GBS) Scene Police, C/O DPM, Humboldtstrasse 15, 53115 Bonn, Germany, www.scene police.de

Stryder, The – Jungle City Twitch, CD

When bands drastically change their line-up and sound, why do they keep the same name? From radio-fuckable pop, to mousy emo, to trip-hop?

These songs are too fucking long. My interest constantly peaks and heads straight toward apathy. (JG) Equal Vision Records, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Subb – Daylight Saving, CD

New skool, polished pop punk, with some mediocre ska thrown in. These guys are headed for Drive-Thru Records for sure! Lotsa 16-year-old girls are sure to be licking their lips and moving their hips to these boys. (JG)

Stomp Records, 78 Rachel E, Montreal, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.stomprecords.com

Subtonix – Tarantism, CD

Holy fuck, this is another record that just can't be beat. It's one of the most original and punk-rock records I've heard in years: multiple creepy female vocals equally backed by drums, saxophone and bass guitar. This is music for an unreleased b-movie scene of a slasher chasing someone. *Tarantism* has the best horror rock sound and look since the Misfits (circa late '70s), The Mummies or even Gwar. The sound is easily described as pulsating yet grooving punk, goth, new wave, no wave Casio rock. Get it? Then get it! This is a soon-to-be classic. (DM) Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ 07002

Sugar Skulls – The Waking Hour, CD

A promising debut that fuses rockabilly, alt rock, and other styles. The vocal interplay between Red Burns and Heather G.B. Kovalcik brings to mind the harmonies of X's John Doe and Exene Cervenka, even if Sugar Skulls' melodramatic lyrics lack that group's bite. (CR)

B.A.K. Records, 870 N. Woodstock St., Philadelphia, PA 19130, www.bakrecords.com

Sunday's Best – The Californian, CD

Mmm, as in moody, mellow, and mauve-colored emo-rock. A musical love affair with sunny California—ni-A. Things that make you go mmm. (JG) Polyvinyl Record Co., POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Superdrag – Last Call for Vitriol, CD

Superdrag should have been a power-pop success story, but a series of mishaps held the Knoxville, Tenn., natives back. After a making a splash with their 1996 full-length debut on Elektra, *Regretfully Yours*, and the single "Sucked Out," the group put out a flop (1998's *Head Trip in Every Key*), parted ways with their label, and lost their bassist. They came back surprisingly strong as an indie act with 2000's *In the Valley of Dying Stars*, and now, after a change of guitarists, the group is set to prove the comeback was no fluke. The caliber of songwriting on *Last Call for Vitriol* trumps the last album, and there is a lot more stylistic variation. The gooey sweet "Baby Goes to Eleven" (featuring Guided By Voices' Robert Pollard) and "Extra-Sensory" easily mix with rockers like "I Can't Wait" and "The Staggering Genius" and oddities like the Eagles-ish country of "Safe & Warm" and the sad troubadour lilt of "Her Melancholy Tune." Thanks in part to the songwriting contributions of bassist Sam

Powers, *Vitriol* betrays more of a '70s arena rock influence than *In the Valley*. (Just check out the ZZ Top riffing on "Drag Me Closer to You.") For the most part, though, it is typical Superdrag—a lovesick, beer-infused combination of sweet melodies and crunching guitars. (CR) Arena Rock Recording Company, 242 Wythe Ave., Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.arenarock-recordingco.com

Swallowing Shit – s/t, CD

Loud hardcore noise from members of Propagandhi, Head Hits Concrete, Projector, and Malefaction. I could've sworn I heard a member of Good Riddance was thrown in there as well. My wife, Nadya, has asked me to turn it off, because she's getting a headache. (JG)

The G-7 Welcoming Committee, POB 27006, 360 Main St. Concourse, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3 Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Syndicate – Since Now All Is Lost, CD

Heavy as fuck metal core with anger, power and mosh. Brethren of Unruh and Gehenna by way of Australia. Lyrics mention flesh, tragedy, sickness and rotting. Yeah, they need a hug. Song five is even a little catchy and rockin'. But for the most part, this is thick, ugly and powerful. Forget Throwdown. This is the kind of band you'd like to watch kids beat each other up to. Well, isn't that every band? (NS)

Deplorable, POB 191, Balmain NSW 2041, Australia, www.deplorablerecordings.com

T Cells – T Cells, 10"

Synthesized blips and bleeps with a few muffled robot vocals. Defiantly experimental, this is going to piss some people off, but noise and new-wave enthusiasts will have a ball with it. The automaton sex on "Strange Movies" is a highlight. (CR) SPS International, no contact information provided

T Minus One – Sloppy Seconds, CD

They've got a few standouts ("Angels," "Solo"), the singer sounds Cringer-esque, and the fuzzy guitars are reminiscent of Yo La Tengo and Jawbox. Alas, this isn't catchy singalong pop, nor is it arty enough to challenge the listener. Promising, but not quite there yet. (AT)

T Minus One, 3292 Greenwood Dr. #3, Fremont, CA 94536, www.tminusone.net

Team 13 – Dairy Of A Madman, CD

Sounds like a band you'd hear on an early '90s skate video. That slightly rougher than pop punk/prepop-punk sound. Catchy midtempo songs with good vocals, played through fuzzy guitars. Not bad. Quit looking for that one band from that one H-Street video and get this instead. (NS) www.team13band.com

Tekulvi – In Recognition Of Your Significant Accomplishments, CD

Six rock songs of the arithmetic persuasion. Think June of 44 without the sharks-and-sailors motif. They've got a nice, subdued sound that teases,

finally bursting forth with calculated discordance. Does that make any sense? I don't know if this record does, but I kinda like it. (AT) Divot Records, POB 14061, Chicago, IL 60614, www.divotrecords.com

Tender Trap – Film Molecules, CD

Former members of the late, great Heavenly play cute and sweet pop, using guitar and bass and keyboard/sequencers. The songs are simple and stripped down to the innermost sugary core. A logical extension from Heavenly and Marine Research. (MG) K Records, POB 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecords.com

Ten Grand – The Comprehensive List Of Everyone Who Has Ever Done Anything Wrong To Us, CD

The story goes something like this: Some guys in Iowa started a band called The Vida Blue. They put together some accomplished, kinda arty hardcore songs, and then the inevitable happened: The hip-pies stepped in. It turns out that a former member of hacky-sack rockers Phish wanted to call his band Vida Blue, too. To acquire the rights to the name, Mr. Phishie offered the Iowans a substantial sum of money, hence the name Ten Grand. Funny, eh? So if this record seems familiar, it should; it's a reissue of the album (after the name change) originally released on Level Plane. Name issues notwithstanding, this is a fine, noisy record. It's emotional hardcore that builds on (but doesn't aurally Xerox) the genre; the strained, screamy vocals and abrasive, dark melodies are reminiscent of mid-'90s yelpers Julia. Throughout the churning guitars and the frenzied drums, Ten Grand manage to build structure over the chaos. This is a clever concept album of sorts, as reflected in the title. And though the song titles are bound to elicit chuckles—"To The Library and Step on It!" and "Never Let Your Girlfriend Go Camping With That Guy She Met in Pottery Class...Trust Me" are far funnier than anything Carrot Top can dream of—the lyrics speak of pain, betrayal, and the crushing, maddening alienation of modern life. Worth picking up. (AT) Sickroom Records, POB 47830, Chicago, IL 60647 www.sickroomrecords.com

There Is No Adam West – Three The Hard Way Which Means Up the Ass, CD

Well, this fast, visceral porn-core got my attention. Extreme D.I.Y., it's a self-distributed CDR marked with sharpie in an ink-jet-and-construction-paper-cover, wrapped in a baggie. With song titles such as "I Wish I Had The Guts To Say No To Anal Rape" and lyrics like "Fucking bitch! / Fucking cunt! / Fuck you in your fucking ass!" ("Three the Hard Way"), it's not clear if this is in-your-face misogynist bullshit or a lame attempt at undercutting it—e.g., "hurling," rather than "going," against the grain (academic speak), because this is violent mosh pit fare. The lead singer screeches so severely he'll surely rip his vocal chords one day and be forced to a whisper, a good thing for humanity whatever this band's political mission. Toward the end of the CD, a possible progressive political agenda becomes



clearer lyrically. Maybe it's just one big public primal scream expressing anger around sex? One way or another, Adam West has balls, and it's your choice if you think they should keep them. Call me Tipper, but little brothers and sisters should be out of the room when you push play. At minimum, it'll hurt their ear drums (remember what Jonathan Richman said?), and it could provoke psychic damage, even without backward masking. (JS)
www.geocities.com/thereisnodamwest

Thin Acid Angels – Mongrel, CD

I love rock 'n' roll! Put another dime in the jukebox, baby! If these guys had a different name, they could be the next big, alternative rock band amongst other greats like Candlebox, Bush and Collective Soul. Maybe... (DM)
TAA, www.thinacidangel.iuma.com

Thirty-Two Frames – s/t, CD

Revelation puts out a much wider range of releases than they used to, but this is definitely in the early Revelation vein, which ain't a bad thing. Inspired retro. (AE)
Revelation Records, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Time To Fly – Birth.Work.Death, CD

Extremely catchy, poppy "emo-rock" with a bit of a harder edge than most. Full of upbeat guitar work, cute harmonizing and fluid time changes. Did I mention the word "catchy?" I can see this band hitting it big opening for the likes of Weezer, Jimmy Eat World or the Get Up Kids. Check 'em out if you like that sort of thing. (MG)
RocketStar Recordings, POB 54108, Redondo, WA 98054-0108

Toxocaras / Pagan Dead, The – split, CD

Graverockers Union is an excellent idea: a collective of musicians, zinesters, and fans organized to promote the psychobilly genre in the U.S. Five songs from each band. Both Toxocaras and The Pagan Dead fit nicely into this genre without being cliché. Wanna be a member? Send an e-mail. (TK)
Graverockers Union Local 666, www.graverocker-union.com

9 Trial by Fire – Ringing in the Dawn, CD

Born out of D.C.'s tradition of politically savvy lyricism and mid-'80s straight-up hard core, *Ringing in the Dawn* is a kick in the ass to the uninspired carbon-copy bands that comprise hardcore these days. Jason Yawn's vocals are vaguely reminiscent of Ian MacKaye's seminal Minor Threat days when he's screaming out (not barking) "no one is safe when there's money to be made" on "Point an Inward Finger" or "WE MUST NOT REST/there are others taking arms against the world/with a message as a weapon and the resolve to make it" on "Test Pattern." *Ringing In The Dawn's* lead track. Musically, the band is brutal—screaming with a tone not too far from Avail—melodic hardcore that's unique and creative. Check the descending riffs of "Steps of St. John's" or the rhythmic bounce between alternate times on "Pilot Light." Political without clinging to slogans, intelligent and musically relentless, Trial by Fire's *Ringing In The Dawn* comes in just over

25 minutes—short, sweet and honest. Like the latest from D4, this record is a reminds us of the living mission and vital social declaration in our burgeoning subculture that's often lost to regimented rules of dress and expression. (GBS)
Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Rd.,
Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

Transistor Transistor – s/t, CDEP

Babyish hardcore with drugs on the cover. The smirking boy in the liner notes should wipe the snotty look off his face. (JS)
Alone Records, POB 3019, Oswego, NY 13126,
www.alonerecords.com

9 Under a Dying Sun – s/t, CD

Under a Dying Sun play melodic and emotive hardcore that falls very much in line with early Boy Sets Fire (without the metallic/chug-chug sound), Cursive and even Hot Water Music. Soft and airy buildups lead to intense, driving and, of course, 'emotional' outpourings through the music. Most certainly the kind of music that will cause black-haired kids across the nation to generously partake in the 'head bob' and the mandatory "pounding of the chest" in sync to the rhythm. (Hey, this isn't a diss at all, but I think that we are all aware of the drill.) The vocals are mostly sung/shouted, with that somewhat whiney element that you know should be annoying but totally isn't on this record. Too slow and not enough shrill vocals to be lumped into the screamo category but not overly melodic enough to be considered, um, emo. Personal/political lyrics, overlaid vocals, etc. I wish that the female member would get some more of the vocal duties, as her voice is great and would be a nice change from the standard sing-shout vocal fare. I have a couple of seven inches by this band, and it's safe to say that they are polishing and maturing their sound quite well. (MG)
Substandard Records, POB 310, Berkeley, CA 94701

Unknown, The -The Real thing, CD

Oh, this is ready for the radio. Oh yeah. Sweet, poppy and fits easily between replaceable Pop-Punk Band No. 68 and Dispensable Alterna-Act No. 70. Destined for second stage at summer radio festivals. "It's got back-up vocals in just the right places!" (GBS)
Boss Tuneage, POB 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, U.K., www.bosst.freemove.co.uk

9 John Vanderslice – Life And Death Of An American Fourtracker, CD

Take one engineer-singer-songwriter of vision, depth, and appeal, grappling with the ontological and epistemological questions of postmodernism and the Enlightenment. Add sloppy hi-fi, rhythm, melody, diverse instrumentation, a compelling storyline, and lyrics from cult punk-folk hero John Darnielle (Mountain Goats, the Extra Glens). Bring far-flung indie-rocker friends together from bands like Spoon (drummer Jim Eno), Death Cab For Cutie (vocalist Ben Gibbard), Beulah (Bill Swan on horns), Mates Of State (Kori Gardner on backing vocals), Kind Of Like Spitting (guitarist Ben Barnett), and the Court and Spark (Tom Heyman and his lap-steel guitar). Trust these musicians to do what they know best, and

let them write their own parts. What do you get? John Vanderslice's third solo (yet highly collaborative) concept album, a satirical rocker about a manic American artist "gone crackers" and "washed up" by 19. These are 12 songs about muses, metaphysics, drugs, four-trackers, and suicide. Vanderslice named his first album after a Neutral Milk Hotel lyric; this time out, fans of the enigmatic should look for references to Marcel Duchamp, the Microphones, the Danielson Famile, Yes, and William Blake, whose poetry on the pain of existence is used as a framing device. "Me and My 424" (track two) is one of my top 10 favorite songs for 2002. (JS)
Barsuk Records, POB 22546, Seattle WA 98122,
www.barsukrecords.com

Vermicious Knid, The – Days That Stand Still, CD

This Canadian foursome turns out a fusion of punk and math rock with the usual obtusely poetic lyrics. The guitar dominates, and vocals alternate between screaming and sweetness. The handclaps on "Finding Seventeen Hands" add an unexpected flourish, though. (CR)
AntiAntenna Recordings, 4-1528 Queen St. W.,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6R 1A4

Vortis – Take the System Down, CD

Fucking insane, crazed punk in the Crucifucks vein, with a 59-year-old Purdue University philosophy professor on vocals. Un-PC, unrelenting and unbelievable, this pro-Unabomber band just plain rules. (AE)
Thick Records, 409 N. Wolcott Chicago, IL 60622,
www.thickrecords.com

Walken – R.02[The.New.Manerism], CD

Interesting "hardcore" in the loose sense. Yelled vocals over heavy tech parts and ever-changing tempos. Take older Hydra Head, a little Dillinger Escape Plan and add more bursts of speed. Six quality songs. I like the diss (if it is one) on song four, too. Hardcore needs more drama. (NS)
Deep Six, POB 6911, Burbank, CA 91510,
www.deepsixrecords.com

Walkmen / Calla – split, CD

Two bands, four songs, and 19 minutes of digitized music. Band one, the Walkmen, have a Velvet Underground feel to them. It is all about a midtempo sound here. Band two, Calla, aren't too much different, with "Mother Sky (By Can)" lasting almost nine minutes or droning with a guitar wanking around most of the time. (EA)
Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Wax Cannon – Life-Sized Animals Walking Around, CD

Fourteen songs from this Iowa band. (Sorry you have to live there.) Some of the tracks are noisy, some poppy, some punky, some rocky and some are not any of the above. (BC)
Commie Martyr, 610 S. Dubuque, Iowa City, IA 52240

Waxwing – Nobody Can Take What Everybody Owns, CD

Seattle punk full-length that wants to be early Jawbreaker but instead sounds like late Jawbreaker.

waypoint / v/a location is everything

The stand-out vocals save Waxwing from sucking and kept me swaying to the beat. (AE)
Second Nature Recordings, POB 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Waypoint – W., CDEP

Poppy power-punk, with decently structured songs and nice melodies. Lyrics are too obvious, but their meaning is well-meant. Sounds sincere. (JS)
www.way-point.net

Weigh Down, The – Good People in the Making, CD

Characteristic emo rock, girl/boy singing over jingly-jangly guitars a la Braid. Ultimate crying and/or hand-holding rock. Decent, but nothing I haven't heard before. (MG)
Meeting & Passing, 178 Fairlawn Ave., Third Floor, Waterbury, CT 06705

Wire – Read & Burn, CD

As it stands, "Bands from days past should stay away from making new records." How many reunion records suck so much ass it hurts to sit down later? HOWEVER, this EP makes me eat my words and some of that other verbal diarrhea. I know Wire started out strong back in the early days of punk. (Who else learned about Wire from Minor Threat's cover of "12XU"?) But they later fell into the whole electronic side of music and became this awful wreck of a band that was only a shadow of what they once were. Now it's 2002, and the prodigal sons return to their roots with six amazing songs that span from one-and-a-half to three minutes each. If you do the math, that means this is way too short. The tunes have this hard-driving effect with a quick and pulsing rhythm section, distorted guitars and even cool keys. The vocals are sneered or sung in a way that you get an audio stink eye with every word. Talk about making an old formula as fresh as it was back in the day. *Read & Burn* gets the Kicking Ass Award for this issue. I think they are even touring again as well. There are brighter days ahead. (DM)
Pink Flag, www.pinkflag.com

Yeah Yeah Yeahs – S/T, CD

After reading about the Yeah Yeah Yeahs in *Entertainment Weekly* at the doctor's office, I was eager to at least hear this record. First thing is that I am tired of the no bass player thing—we have heard it before (Cheater Slicks, Bantam Rooster, White Stripes, JSBX). These five songs do jump off the speakers, but I just kept feeling like I have heard this before. This time a girl fronts the vocals. (EA)
Touch and Go Records, POB 25520 Chicago, IL 60625

Zod – Method of Power Distribution, CD

During the time I lived in the Bay Area, I seemed to miss any show with these two guys. Having met half the band, I looked into the music based on this guy Mario alone. Now that I acquired a copy of their CD, I'm kicking myself for not making that extra effort to have seen them play. This drum, bass and vocals duo is simply amazing. In theory, their music is minimalistic, but the end product surpasses everyone's expectations of that movement. Zod is a hard-driving machine turned up to 11 with nonstop

pounding on the drums and every noise possible escaping from a bass guitar. The voice is definitely an appealing factor to the music. Whether he's singing or screaming, he sounds like someone you can relate to, and you can't help but feel drawn to what he's saying. Musically, they're similar to the Minutemen, enemymine, the Turing Machine, Don Caballero and others, but they really do make this sound theirs. And on top of everything else, the CD packaging kicks ass. (Who's in art school?) If anyone reading this magazine wants to take a chance on a CD, this should be the one. It's angry, melodic, catchy, noisy and fun for the whole family. (DM)
Something Sacred Records, POB 15533 San Luis, CA 93401, www.somethingsacred.com

♀ V/A – Battle For The Airwaves Vol. 2, 7"

I couldn't ask for a better four-way split than this compilation. It's West Coast Punk (The Workin' Stiffs and The Bodies) vs. East Coast Oi (The Wretched Ones and The Templars). You don't have to pick a winner because all four of the bands will floor you whether or not you're already a fan. I recently saw The Templars live, and it was the best oi set I've ever seen, hands down. My sister is about to have her first baby in NJ, and I'm planning on sneakily arranging my first visit to see it on a weekend that coincides with a Wretched Ones gig. Heh heh. Unfortunately, The Workin' Stiffs and The Bodies aren't as easy to see if you live on the East Coast, but they're just as impressive. None of these songs is available elsewhere, and each song beautifully showcases these bands' signature sounds. The Templars play mainline oi, with minimally distorted guitars and a major classic-rock influence. The Wretched Ones play slow to midtempo punk with gruff oi vocals. The Workin' Stiffs and Bodies both play aggressive melodic California streetpunk. These bands are big enough that you'd think everyone has heard them by now, but with the punk scene as fractionalized as it is, there are probably still some sad saps that have missed out on these faultless bands. (AE)
Radio Records, POB 1452, Sonoma, CA 95476, www.vom.com/~radio77

V/A – Billy Volume One, CD

This 21-band rockabilly/psychobilly comp includes bands such as Nekromantix, Big Sandy and the Fly-Rite Trio, and Wayne Hancock. Considering the CD's priced under \$5, you can't go wrong. (AE)
Hepcat, POB 1108, Orange, CA 92856, www.hepcatrecords.com

♀ V/A – Does Everyone Stare Records, CD

This label sampler is brought to us by two labels (Does Everyone Stare in Canada and Bosstuneage in England) known for putting out quality melodic punk/power pop type stuff. There are 23 songs by 14 bands on here with lots of unreleased or hard-to-find songs. I actually own a few of these releases. My favorite tracks on here are by the Milwaukeees, Manifesto Jukebox, The Tank (ex Welt, Brown Lobster Tank), Blocko, and the Unknown, but there are also quality songs by Mico, Rhythm Collision, Serpico (ex-Mega City '4), Sylvie, Punchbuggy,

Joshua, High Lo Fi, Woolworthy and Pocket Genius. This comp is perfect for people who grew up on melodic punk or pop punk but are looking for a more grown up pop-punk sound now. (NS)
Does Everyone Stare, POB 35004, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2R8, Canada, www.doeseveryone-stare.com

V/A – Fields And Streams, A Kill Rock Stars Collection, 2xCD

This is a collection of 45 unreleased songs by the friends and family of KRS: Deerhoof, The Butchies, Mecca Normal, Bangs, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs and many more. This is an awesome collection of quality music for cheap. You're stupid if you don't take a chance on this—that should be slogan for this comp. (DM)
Kill Rock Stars, www.killrockstars.com

♀ V/A – Fight To Win!, CD

It's rare that I get to review a spoken word album, which *Fight To Win!* ultimately qualifies as being. Two musicians provide dark melodies using a number of instruments as a background to spoken-word pieces from Sean Brandt and Sue Collis of Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. There are 11 well-spoken, powerful, aggressive and smart pieces, and the background instrumentals add an ambience to the words. Still, *Fight To Win!* is a very limited record targeting those interested in antigovernment, antipoverty spoken word. As an added bonus, the record comes with a 20 page booklet full of provocative and informative writing on the topic of poverty. (BN)
G7 Welcoming Committee, POB 27006 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

V/A – How We Rock, CD

A rock 'n' roll comp that I assume to be an attempt to cash in on the success of the Hives, the Strokes, etc.—which explains garage rockers New Bomb Turks and Turbonegro, but not the Donnas and the Supersuckers. Still a dope comp. (GBS)
Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.burningheartrecords.com

V/A – Immigrant Sun Records/OneDaySavior Recordings Summer Sampler 2002, CD

Split sampler disc with lots of tracks from each label. I haven't heard of most of these bands, but predominately they play rock bordering on the emo edge. Includes tracks from The Miracle of 86, I Robot, Celebrity, In Dying Days, The Killing Tree and more. (JG)
Immigrant Sun, POB 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com; OneDaySavior, POB 372, Williston Park, NY 11596, www.onedaysavior.com

♀ V/A – Location Is Everything Vol. 1, CD

A retrospective of Jade Tree's past two years, I initially approached this compilation with caution. I used to diss Jade Tree for being "emo" and spew uninformed shit—talk about sticking my foot in my mouth. After one listen, I take back all the shit I talked. They have a wonderfully eclectic roster, from DC hardcore Trial by Fire, to Mighty Flashlight's quiet, spacey strumming, to the electro-synth pop



v/a love & rebellion / v/a you don't need darkness to do what you think is right

weirdness of Milemarker and the pop musings of Owls. After listening to Epitaph's two latest comps, Jade Tree's *Location is Everything Vol. 1* is a testament to a dynamic group of musicians operating below the radar of the mainstream—an indictment to labels that blindly follow models of success—and sets a new standard for labels across the board. To be able to move from The Explosion's "God Bless the S.O.S" to Zero Zero's "Back to Hell" and the AC/DC-tinged "Milk and Apples" by Jets to Brazil is a wonderful thing. There aren't too many labels that can showcase such an array of sounds and come off naturally. Fuck me if Jade Tree doesn't pull it off. Featuring 16 previously released tracks from the Jade Tree roster and seven new ones from the likes of Pedro the Lion, Jets to Brazil, Milemarker and The Promise Ring. (GBS)
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

V/A – Love & Rebellion, CD

I had hoped this would be better than it is, but sadly, a lot of the tracks on here are just pretty generic punk. There's the good (Haymarket Riot, Tom Daily), the OK (The Gadgets), the bad (The Arrivals) and the terrible (Vortis). Pick your poison. (KR)
Thick Records, www.thickrecords.com

V/A – The Luxury Sounds..., CD

Fifteen original-sounding artists, including: words for snow, notpictured, fiesel, and the method and result. From light rock to arty farty music to some interesting stuff. This is a good look at the lighter, creative side of the indie-rock scene. (BC)
Losing Blueprint Records, 21a Day St. Waltham, MA 02453, www.losingblueprint.com

V/A – My Very Last Breath: The Emo Diaries, Chapter 8, CD

Dear Diary: Today I got a new CD full of competent, but kind of boring "emo" bands. Ugh. I mean, I like emo and a few Deep Elm bands, but none of this stuff is really off the hook! LOL! I dunno. Maybe some of these bands will develop into something more. Speaking of which, I think I'm starting to get boobies. (NS)
Deep Elm, POB 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

V/A – NE vs. NC, CD

A shitload of Nebraska bands take on a ton of North Carolina bands. Who wins? Well, I thought it was an equal effort from both sides. Equal effort

of soft to medium indie-rock-sounding bands, but if I had to pick an MVP it would be...nope, I just can't do it. Well OK, it's me! (BC)
Redemption Recording Co., POB 10238 Beverly Hills, CA 90213, www.redemption.net

V/A – Notes From The Underground, CD

Featuring four bands playing political poppier punk, this Canadian label's sampler aims to go from where Propagandhi left off. Depending on your level of idealism (and level of appreciation for protest slogans turned catchy singalongs), you'll either love this or hate it. Featuring Bombs Over Providence, Protest the Hero, Marilyn's Vitamins, and Closet Monster. (AT)
www.undergroundoperations.com

V/A – Punk-O-Rama 7, CD

The latest selection of singles from 19 Epitaph bands, most of which you can already find. Typical sunny pop punk and straight-up rock for the *Punk-O-Rama* series, featuring Hot Water, Pennywise, the Dropkicks, Bouncing Souls, Millencolin and others. Includes Rancid's cover of NOFX's "Bob." (GBS)
Epitaph 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

V/A – Reality Part #4, 12"

Brutal compilation of trash, hardcore, noise and grind bands. Featuring the likes of Haymaker, Damad, Sepsism and Ruido, this record is a relentless assault on your hearing that may induce a headache. Isn't that the point anyway?
Deep Six Records, POB 6911, Burbank, CA. 91510

9 V/A – Survive and Advance (Volume 1), CD

Instead of releasing a retrospective for the label's 13th anniversary, the folks at Merge decided to create a compilation of its current bands' best. This is an overview of what's going on at Merge, and it's not merely a throw-away set of old material. No, many of the tracks are live or previously unreleased, so this should appeal to jaded hipsters—oops, I mean seasoned indie-rock veterans—and virgin ears alike. The best thing about this compilation (nay, the label itself) is the diverse variety of music. From the lazy slide guitar of Radar Bros. to the '60s-pop of The Ladybug Transistor, to the catchy bounce of Imperial Teen, it all comes together without sounding monotonous. Annie Hayden, East River Pipe (who have gone psychedelic—who knew?), Portastatic, Lambchop, Ashley Stove, and soon-to-be-ubiquitous Spoon are among the 14 contributors to this collection. Whether you're already familiar with these bands, or you're just looking for a few new favorites, this is worth

picking up. Think of this as a mix tape of sorts from Merge—one that's bound to produce some selections for the next mix tape you make. (AT)
Merge, POB 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

9 V/A – 20 Years of Dischord, 3xCD

I had this idea when I was reading *Dance of Days*: "There should totally be a soundtrack to this book," I thought. With the arrival of the years-in-the-making Dischord box set, I pretty much found my soundtrack. It's like a massive tray of 73 hors d'oeuvres, each one a tasty morsel of the bounty of the label's back catalogue. Every band that appeared on Dischord, except for three recent additions, is on one of these CDs. Disc one and two follow a chronological path down Memory Lane, beginning with the first Dischord band, the Teen Idles, and ending with a Q and Not U song. Disc three is 24 tracks of rare or unreleased material from bands like the Teen Idles, Government Issue, SOA, Void, Shudder to Think and more. On top of that, you have six live video clips of the Teen Idles, Untouchables, SOA, Faith, Void and Deadline. Additionally, there's a 130-page four-color book with liner notes by Ian MacKaye, Jeff Nelson and Henry Rollins, plus bios on each band. Needless to say, this is a lot of material. The video segments were taped in the early 1980s, so they're of poor quality. You watch them to get a sense of performances were like, not to hear anything, because it's all noise set to a barely audible beat. I think that's part of the charm, though. Going back to the songs, you can't help but love something this comprehensive, even if some of it isn't so great. Many of the bands on here, though, are legendary (Minor Threat, Government Issue, Embrace, Rites of Spring, SOA, Scream, Dag Nasty, the list goes on), and these CDs show how Dischord changed over the years. Listen to Ian MacKaye in Minor Threat, skip ahead 19 tracks and hear him in Egg Hunt. This is a history book for your CD player, and it's as engrossing as any other—and it's only \$25. Long live Dischord! (KR)
Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NOW, Washington, DC 20007-1802, www.dischord.com

V/A – You Don't Need Darkness To Do What You Think Is Right, CD

An international collection of light indie bands. These heavily sedated bands bring to mind Stereolab and Belle and Sebastian. There's even what seems to be some German dance music with tape loops.
Geographic, www.dominorecordco.com

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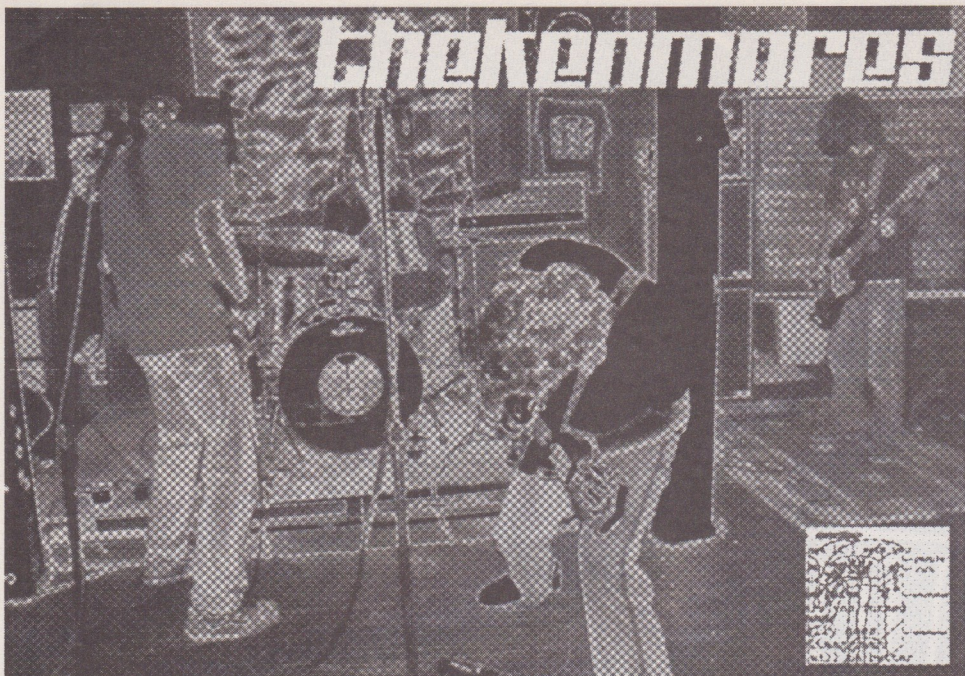
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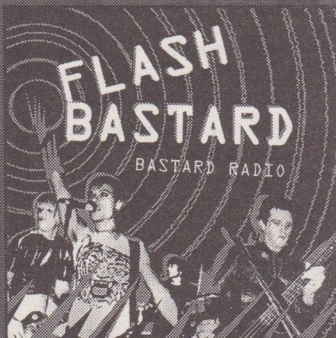
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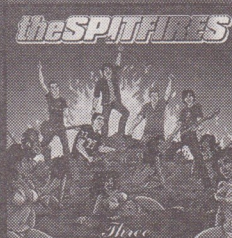


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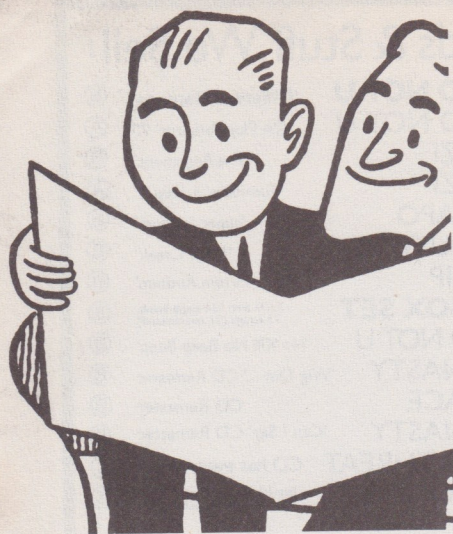
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zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Vincent Chung (VC), Jen Dolan (JD), Dan Laidman (DAL), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

◆ Agricouture #2

I really enjoyed this zine that focuses on "music and culture on the prairie." Who knew that Bismarck, N.D., had a punk scene? It opens with a great article on keeping young people in the North Dakota area. The ideas they outline (such as making concerted efforts to include young people in leadership positions and creating showcase events for underground art and music) are really inspiring and something I'd like to see in every city. Even though I've never heard of either of the feature bands, Straphanger and Imipolex G, I still enjoyed reading about their band members' experiences making music and being on the road prior to their recent break-ups. Also included: an interview with Dianogah; opinion pieces on Fred Durst, hip hop and politics; and a discourse on the movie *Memento* and its similarities to the novel *In the Lake of the Woods*. This was a really great read with wonderful variety and scope in the selection of the pieces. Check it out if you're interested in something fresh. The editor's letter in the beginning also mentions that this could be the last issue, so support a truly great underground effort for that reason as well. (CS)

No price given, 1834 South 20th St., Suite 6, Grand Forks, ND 58201, www.vastlane.org/agricouture

Boston Punk Flyers '96 to '02

A compilation of a guy's collection of various old show flyers. If you're in a band and looking for inspiration for your own flyers, this might interest you. Also consider checking out his self-published comic, *Paul the Punker*, available from the same address. (CS)
Free, FNS Publishing, POB 1299, Boston, MA 02130, FNS_Publishing@msn.com

Broken Pencil #19

This zine is truly great. *Broken Pencil* calls our attention to Canada's independent arts and does so to perfection. The topics and artists covered in this issue are varied and well written. Articles on Winnipeg-based Royal Arts Lodge and Slovenian indie culture plus reviews on all things Canadian. Think *Punk Planet* meets *Utne Reader*. (PS)
\$4.95, POB 203, Stn P, Toronto ON, M5S 257 Canada

Conspiracy, The

An ordinary, semiscene-specific zine produced by a collective in the Philippines. This "women's issue" had plenty of columns, interviews with female zinesters (most notably Chris of *Slug & Lettuce*) and show/zine/record reviews. Although it's encouraging to read something like this, there are more insightful zines. TC merely scratches the surface of issues concerning gender politics and their "hardcore punk community." (AA)

\$3, Take 4 Collective, POB 3800, CPO, Manila 1000, Philippines.

Dead Beat #1 & #2

This is one of my favorite zine genres, what I like to call the "Scene Life Raft" zine. "There are plenty of punks down here, but the scene is fucking deader than dead," writes editor Mike in issue one. So he started *Dead Beat* to pump a few volts into south Florida's punkosphere, and he does just that with his local scene coverage, like a hilarious interview with the Mary Tyler Whores. Only problem is, despite complaining about how everyone only goes to big-name punk shows, he spends too much time on writing reviews, discographies and appreciations of big boys like NOFX and Bad Religion. Stick with the local. (DAL)
stamps/trade/donations, Mike Sokoloff, 400 E. Atlantic Blvd. #16, Pompano Beach, FL 33060

Deadxstop #4 & #4.5

Personal writings on the relationship problems of hardcore kids? Could be interesting, but it's not. "...and for five minutes she was my girlfriend again." BOOORING! Where are the fatal attractions? Where are the dramatic car chases? If one's going to take it back to high-school drama, at least put a dancing Matthew Lillard in there. (VC)
No price given, 8127 Waterbury Dr., #203, Woodridge, IL 60517

◆ Die Trying #2 / Father's Day

This issue of *Die Trying*, a handsomely bound mini book, consists of random photos scavenged from the editor's tour of duty at a one-hour photo shop. There's a lonely ceiling fan, a confused dog behind a fence, and other images that are all the more

creepy and evocative from being entirely without context. The editor gives some light commentary underneath that adds to the mystery. I would have liked to see some pictures with actual people included, but maybe he was a little squeamish about violating people's privacy. Oh well. Still quite an accomplishment that is a nice addition to any zine collection. *Father's Day* is a handwritten memoir of his relationship with his dad through the tumult of divorce and two heart attacks. It's quite touching and a great affirmation of the power of zines. There's emotion here that comes through in the subtle variations of the handwriting. (DAL)

\$1 each, Robert Newsome, Second Period Industries, POB 948, Athens, GA 30603-0948

Dumpsterland #11

A pocket-sized zine for the dumpster-diving revolutionary. Step-by-step instructions on building a pressure cooker and D.I.Y shit composting make up the bulk of this short read. Recommended for the burgeoning recluse. (PS)
Free, POB 104 page Place, Glover VT 05839, dumpsterland@riseup.net

Faggo #3

Another Scene Life Rafter, this time for queer punk in Vancouver. "We can all run off to San Francisco or New York—but it's when we bring ideas from those other cities back to our hometown that we truly build community," writes Editor Kim. Right on. Advice on boosting your local scene, lots of personal anecdotes and short stories, interviews with Skinjobs and Undertow, and candid, thoughtful, graphic sexual pieces, with photos. (DAL)
\$4 U.S., \$5 Canadian, #104-1314 Broughton St., Vancouver, BC, V6G 2P7, Canada

Go Metric! #15

No one loves pop culture quite like the folks at *Go Metric!* Interviews with the Primate 5, Chris Butler (of The Waitresses) and Ray Davies are informative and lighthearted. Guy Picciotto steps in for their recurring Queen-appreciation interview. Music reviews, a retrospective of Jet Li films, and a look at



comic books past (an article on Jack Cole) and present (a conversation with Rev. Norb) make *Go Metric!* a pleasure to read. (PS)

2780-F Ryewood Ave, Copley OH 44321

Green Anarchy #9

A Green Anarchist's world seems so distant compared to mine. I read from cover to cover, fascinated by feeling like I was transported into an eerie sci-fi utopia—a surreal environment with brief nods towards familiarity. While probably trivializing their cause, the zine is sensational, glorified and alienating. (VC)

\$1.50 to POB 11331, Eugene, OR 97440,
www.greenanarchy.org

Heckler #55

Per usual, *Heckler* is the skate zine that looks like a real magazine. Its glossy and colorful package delivers the aesthetic, but the content displays the fact that these people aren't professionals. The writing is gimmicky and sparse, which leaves a lot to be desired. (Interviews at fewer than 250 words? C'mon!) (VC) 1915 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814, www.heckler.com

Heckler #56

This is a glossy magazine devoted to snowboarding, skateboarding and music. I really liked the colorful layout and spastic picture placement. It's the travel issue, so there's lots of variety (U.S. and international locales) and road-trip stories. Also several pages of music reviews. (CS)

\$3.99, Heckler, 1915 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814, www.heckler.com

Hello My Name Is Rachel #4

A short collection of journal entries coupled with a poem or two. While I can safely assume that her tales of near rape and intimacy issues are traumat-

ic, the writing seems far removed from the events themselves. (PS)

\$1 or trade, 3269 25th St., San Francisco CA 94110

Hit it Or Quit It #16

If zines spend less time brown-nosing industry peers for social capital, they could come off as less publicity machinery and more as actual reads with nonregurgitated content. (Who wants to read someone's translation of a press release?) Jessica Hopper, the name that everyone loves to hate, edits this atypical music zine. Leaving PR to her other profession, she utilizes *HIOQI* unapologetically to stir waves in today's dully complacent mini-industry. Hopper's compiled some of the most notorious personalities, including Pat West (the guy who once interviewed the Knicks' Anthony Mason about *The Simpsons*), Doug Mosurak (who took personal stabs in a *HeartattaCk* review, causing a slew of drama on that durned internet), Sean Na Na (who gets wet in sweatpants under the moniker Har Mar) and former Planetree Josh Hooten. (He actually seems wholesome next to the rest.) Despite the namecalling whirlwind that follows like a stubborn raincloud, one can't deny that *HIOQI*'s originality levels its contemporaries. Each interview strays from formulaic chatter and takes "confrontational" to new levels. From accusing The Locust of discriminating against fat people to grilling Cave In's Steve Brodsky with a Boston quiz (Q: "Wicked or Pissa?") to having Tonie Joy dispel a flurry of rumors on his drug and toilet habits to talking with Botch about "gay angst," the zine is snotty and self-important but actually delivers its genuine offering. A tribute-bands feature ("I Was a Teenage Antioch Arrow Cover Band") tops it off with sheer genius. (VC) No direct mailorder, order through www.insound.com

Holy Titclamps #18

Back after a three-year hiatus! *Holy Titclamps* features queer artists and writers who look past the main-

stream. Includes short fiction, poetry, comics, zine reviews, the "What to Do in a Month in San Francisco" calendar and a rant called "I Wanna Be a Gay Wingnut" written by editor Larry-bob. (JD) Free in San Francisco or \$1 cash by mail, POB 590488, San Francisco, CA 94159-0488, www.holytitclamps.com

Inside Books Project Newsletter, The #2

If one retains any ounce of optimism after running the judicial gauntlet, one aims for self-improvement. These writings reek of self-education and empowerment as its contributions come from the incarcerated (dotted with prison-related fact sheets). Less of a cut'n paste "zine" aesthetic would give its writers more sense of importance. (VC) 12th St. Books, Inside Books Project, 827 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701

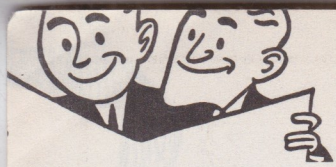
Lunchbox #1

Tailor-made for the kids who buy "punk" accessories at Hot Topic and aren't afraid to proclaim "Blink-182 never wanted to become corporate sluts!" Features an interview with the Eyeliners, a tribute to *Ghost World* star Thora Birch and the unreadable reprint of an instant messenger conversation with Poser Punk Sellouts. (JD) Stamps and/or donation, 227 74th St., North Bergen, NJ 07047

Matte #2

More intellectual repository of literati than zine, contributors ruminate on everything from the disappointment of Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls to the treasure of Mexican wrestling films. The publication is a beautiful thing to behold—but would benefit from shorter, tighter articles and more kitschy humor to balance out the theory. (JD) \$6.95 check or money order only, POB 15345, Seattle, WA 98115, www.mattemag.com

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (👁) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

**Multi-Kid #2**

The *Multi-Kid* crew has produced an insightful zine that includes articles on how to survive a seemingly noncorporate job as a young person of color and a few essays about identity from a Texan gay boy and a Korean-American girl. One interesting piece is the "Notes from a Possible Guatemalan Journal" wherein the author writes about her experiences through the films she viewed while there. As if that weren't enough, there's even a recipes section. (AA) \$2, POB 414, Berkeley, CA 94701

News From Nowhere #1

Another beginner's guide to life as an anarchist. The usual essays and manifestos are all in place, with a layout similar to your local free paper. I'm a bit conflicted with the layout vs. content, as it seems intent on passing off opinions as fact. Perhaps a few news articles may lighten its heavy-handed stance and help *News From Nowhere* live up to its name. (PS) SASE, POB 10384, Eugene OR 97440

19 Cent Zine #15

A half-size zine full of crazy personal/music news and reviews. The content is all over the place and includes some wacky cartoons that must only be funny in an inside-joke sort of way. It also includes reviews of current albums by Earshot, Candiass, Millencolin and other local bands from Ohio and South Carolina. (CS) \$1 or trade, 343 A King St., Charleston, SC 29401, www.angelfire.com/zines/19centzine

• Paping #6

Strong collection of comics from varied artists with different styles. Leads off with the account of a NYC public schools teacher's adventures in teaching art to third to fifth graders. I like his page charting their reactions to different kinds of music, from Otis Redding to Crimpshrine. I also like the character sketches of some of his students, including Edgar the strong-willed Argentinian. And everyone has a weird surrealist face from Picasso's later years. Also some nice, moody one-page briefs and concept stuff that breaks up the more narrative pieces well. There are also some silent, surrealist pages with spectacular drawing worthy of the highest quality comics. One of the pieces, in two brief pages of mostly tight, cropped close-up drawings, evokes what it's like to take the subway in such striking detail that it left me awash in nostalgia for my time in New York. This is a great DIY testament to living in the city with a wonderful variety of styles. Highly recommended. (DAL) \$3, 60 St. Marks, NY, NY 10003

• Razorcake #8

When I get rich and throw a raging kegger in the Hollywood Hills with my neighbor Brett Gurewitz, I'm putting this zine on the V.I.P. list. Very rarely do standard music magazines exude any personality other than a schmoozy, "Hey, I'm doing this to hang out backstage with Nashville Pussy and get free CDs!" vibe. Therefore I toss these in the pile labeled "MASTURBATION TO THE MAX" and nab some sad emo zine to stab my eyes out. Retodd has compiled a quirky list of columnists ranging from Rich

Mackin (from the constantly funny *Book of Letters* zine) to the Rhythm Chicken. (It's hard to explain. In this issue, he subversively raids German tourist spots by playing drums to forgiving bystanders in a bunny costume). Each writer is heartily entertaining and strays far from the generic ranting circle jerks found in most zines today. This issue features diverse interviews with The Beltones, DS-13, Squab, Jello Biafra, The Adicts, and others. All read like probing questions from a No. 1 fan, which makes for personality-filled small talk, not shallow chit chat about seemingly profound influences. (VC) \$3 to POB 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042, www.razorcake.com

Reason to Believe #5

Imagine *HeartattaCk* gone Euro: dependence on punk community contributions to create a "forum" and soft discrimination in the weeding process. An array of ads, articles, and interviews pertaining to the prolific International underground scene, so it's an important resource. Self-help tips and an amazing interview with labels about DIY Distribution make it worthwhile. (VC) \$2 (cash only) in Europe, \$3 (cash only) in U.S. to 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds, LS6 1LJ U.K.

Retard Riot #5 & #6

This zine is small enough to tuck behind your ear, or to put in your breast pocket if you're one of those button-down types. Funny record reviews ("This would be better on vinyl. CDs don't have mohawks. CDs don't drink beer"), letter letters to the editor, graffiti, book reviews, and cartoons showing Mickey Mouse as a nazi and with "penis boobs." (DAL) Noah Lyon, 67 Barclay Road, Clintondale, NY 12515

Riot77 Magazine #4

Large, glossy, B&W zine, mostly covering the current Irish punk scene. Interviews with the Buzzcocks, TKO Records, an article on comedian Billy Connolly, lots of music reviews. Some of the graphic layouts make the text a bit hard to read, but it's still a strong, well-produced zine. (CS) \$2.50, 31 Saint Patrick's Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland, riot77magazine@hotmail.com

Royal Flush #2

I'm decidedly ambivalent about *Royal Flush*. I was impressed by the caliber of the drawings and the overall packaging, but the sophomoric humor and tired gags left me pretty bored. Perhaps if I had been a *Mad Magazine* fan in my youth, I'd have more an appreciation for this book. (JD) \$8.95, 97 Clinton St. Ste. #1B, New York, NY 10002

Slingshot Vol. 1, No. 75

Slingshot espouses radical politics in the East Bay and beyond. This issue contains articles on Gay Shame (a growing alternative to Gay Pride), anarchism, detriments caused by cell phones and an in-depth feature on the Israel/Palestine conflict. Also includes a social-gatherings calendar and, sadly, obituaries for three young activists. (JD) Free in the Bay Area or \$2 by mail, 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705, www.tao.ca/~slingshot

Snagletooth

Another mini-sized zine. Pretty sparse on content, but I think the cartoon fingerprints are a great idea. Very cute. Mostly little concept drawings, with one page of nonsense writing. (DAL) Sasha M. Pearl, 24 Fisk St., Red Hook, NY 12571

• Snake Pit Anthology II

Meet Ben White. See Ben White's life unfold on a daily basis as he draws a three-panel strip that succinctly sums up his day. See Ben drink, smoke pot, hang out, have band practice, play video games, go to work at a local record store, occasionally meet girls, go to shows and parties, and tour with The Peabodys. See Ben get fucked up. This anthology is a collection of *Snake Pit* #11-20 (all of which are out of print) and includes a daily strip for an entire year of his life. His day-in/day-out trials fill up an endearing 104 pages. There are parts that were a bit repetitive, but that's how life is at times: routine. Then there are the little gems that make you chuckle under your breath. In this really odd way, *Snake Pit* is comforting in its lackluster description of the banality of life. If you have never read it, get this anthology. I wouldn't be surprised if, by the time you've finished reading it, you combed the white pages to give him a call to hang out. (AA) \$3, 2100 Guadalupe #138, Austin, TX 78705.

• TapeOp #30

This magazine has a lot of great information and would be a valuable resource to novice musicians. The article on guitar tuning nightmares was very informative—it's worth checking out just for this article. There are also interviews with record master Howie Weinberg and Motown Records producer Bob Olhsson (which includes some fun time-warp pictures of Motown Studios in the late '60s). And if you're the DIY kind, there's a detailed article with diagrams on how to build your own two-channel vacuum-tube mic preamp. They also review some indie and underground music sent in by readers, so consider that resource if you're looking to get your music heard. Overall, this is a very informative magazine that is chock full of great tips in all areas of recording. There's something for everyone here. (CS) Free subscriptions in the U.S., POB 507, Sacramento, CA 95812, www.tapeop.com

Wonkavision #18

I don't understand. Why be so prolific with interviews when most of them aren't really worth reading? Between the 15 interviews, the filler pours out insulting, contempt-filled rants of how the scene should be. I can have opinions told to me in conversation; I don't need them to be hand-fed. (VC) PO Box 63642, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.wonkavisiononline.com

You Idiot #1

Touting the motto "Debating the Obvious," this issue gleefully delves into well-trod topics. You *Idiot* may not be particularly insightful, but is certainly enjoyable, especially the pieces on 1980s antidrug and bible-inspired video games as well as Nate's take on the antirock paperback he comes across in a Christian bookstore. (JD) \$1, POB 8995, Minneapolis, MN 55408

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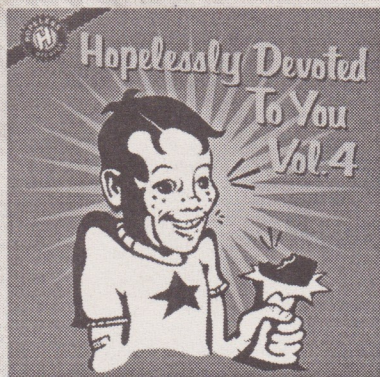
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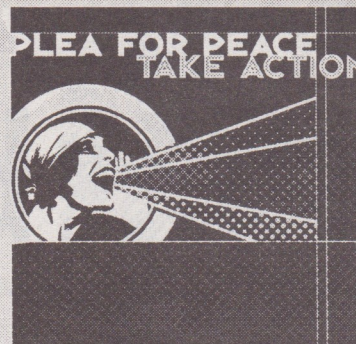
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McSweeney's, issue #7 McSweeney's

Dave Eggers, the literary journal *McSweeney's* leading man, first made a name for himself with the San Francisco Bay Area's *Might* magazine. Although not strictly a zine, *Might* was clearly a product of zine culture. Like *The Baffler*, *Hermenaut*, *Bitch*, and other publications with roots in the late '80s and early '90s, *Might* testified to the facility with which do-it-yourself ideology could be transplanted to the world of publishing.

Although one step further removed from purity, *McSweeney's* demonstrated many of the characteristics of those hybrid creations: a seemingly perverse attachment to obscurity (printing the journal in Iceland); a refusal to take itself seriously (ironizing both its form and content in an absurdly expanded masthead); and a willingness to take risks on art that would fall through the cracks at a more traditional journal (the "failed" stories of up-and-coming writers, pieces that veered uneasily from genre to genre). Because *McSweeney's* paid just enough lip service to the literary establishment to avoid being ignored, the approach succeeded fabulously.

In less than a decade, it has developed the sort of brand loyalty that most publishers will never attain. In this respect, *McSweeney's* functions like an independent music label with a clearly defined identity: Kill Rock Stars, Thrill Jockey, Dischord. And that's an impressive legacy in itself. The best indication of *McSweeney's* achievement is that publication within its pages—not unlike getting Kill Rock Stars' Slim Moon to promote you to his label—guarantees an author the imprimatur of some-

one-worth-looking-into. *McSweeney's* has, in short, become a resumé builder. There's nothing wrong with that *per se*. But it does present certain challenges for the journal. The bigger *McSweeney's* becomes, the more literary professionals desire to be included in its fold, the harder it gets for the publication to sustain its cutting edge.

Reading the latest and seventh installment of the journal, you can't help but wonder whether Eggers and company have mislaid those instructions on how to care for a blade. To be sure, the issue contains wonderful writing. The excerpt from William T. Vollman's 4,000 page unpublished manuscript *Rising Up, Rising Down* is both powerful and prescient in its pre-9/11 analysis of a Muslim insurgency. And the "lost" chapter from Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* is a delight. The issue is also handsomely put together—its cardboard cover is bound with an industrial-strength rubber band that snugly secures individual chapbooks inside. The fourth issue of *McSweeney's* was a similar composite affair, though its contents were collected in a box (with a Surrealist picture of a "skiing" robin on the cover). The difference is that the latest *McSweeney's* lacks the amusingly excessive editorial frame that many of the journal's readers have not-so-secretly preferred to the pieces being framed. It would have been easy to include something like the "Notes and Background and Clarifying Charts and Some Complaining" chapbook that provided a delightful map to the fourth issue or even the much shorter editorial comments from the sixth one. The absence of such a guide is sig-

nificant.

Perhaps Eggers is too busy with 826 Valencia (www.826valencia.com), the San Francisco-based non-profit he helped found, to give *McSweeney's* his special touch. 826 Valencia is a worthy venture, providing "free drop-in tutoring, workshops, storytelling and entertainment events" for grade-schoolers and teens in order to help them use language more effectively and creatively. Still, you can't help wondering whether Eggers is suffering from a crisis of confidence. His repeated insistence in interviews that he dislikes irony baffles the readers who love him for sounding ironic. Maybe we just need to wait until the next issue—coming soon to an independent bookseller near you—for a full dose of the *McSweeney-ness* we crave. More likely, though, we will have to content ourselves with the realization that the *McSweeney's* brand is becoming more diffuse, not unlike many of our favorite independent labels. Perhaps this is inevitable. The center will not hold forever. For now, though, the journal remains a rare shining light in the world of publishing and deserves your support. —Charlie Bertsch

The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity Tariq Ali Verso Books

With *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity*, political thinker, novelist, and filmmaker Tariq Ali has written a book grand in scope. Setting out to write about "Islam, its founding myths, its origins, its history, its culture, its riches, its divisions," Ali ranges over the history and

politics both distant and recent of Islamic secularism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab socialism, the politics of nationalism and democracy in South-Asia, and American imperialism. His account is rich in detail and insight and makes for compelling reading throughout.

Ali has also written a book guided by a set of commendable moral commitments and dispositions. Thoroughly dedicated to the ideals of social justice and democracy, and deeply disgusted by their perversion at the hands of fanatical mullahs and rapacious modern day imperialists alike, Ali continually focuses the reader's attention on the tragic story of democracy unfulfilled in the Muslim world. Yet even though his moral compass points straight toward the principles of democracy and rationality, Ali thankfully avoids moralizing. Instead, Ali is careful to chart the decisions on the part of political leaders and social movements that led, on the one hand, to the failures and distortions of modernization throughout the Arab world and, on the other, to the present crisis. In doing so, he provides a useful counterpoint to the highly moralistic interpretation of global politics emanating from official American channels. By emphasizing the inherently political nature of the current situation, Ali helps us to see that the crisis is not simply another iteration in the foreordained and eternal battle between the morally virtuous and the morally corrupt. Things could

have been different. We did not have to be in the mess we find ourselves in.

And Ali has written an eloquent book. Witty, mordant, and engaged, Ali's prose is simultaneously appropriate to the seriousness of his topic and thoroughly enjoyable to read. But Ali has also written a book that is mistitled.

First, the title misrepresents the book's content. In *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, Ali devotes relatively little attention to analyzing the conflict between radical Islam and American hyper-patriotism, the two "fundamentalisms" of the title. He is right to remind us that civilizations, whether Western or Islamic, are not monolithic entities. Instead, they are—and have been riven by—competing political ideologies and conflicting value systems. Yet beyond making this basic point, Ali does not lay out in any systematic way how Islamic fundamentalism and US patriotism/imperialism clash. The nature of this clash, for example, is not clear, nor are its various modalities.

The apparent ill fit between title and content aside, there is a second and more significant way in which the book's title is unfortunate. Even if Ali does not directly examine the conflict between radical Islam and American imperialism, his title presumes not only that there is a clash, but that its two combatants are *equivalent* to one another, empirically and morally. In Ali's muscular prose, the nexus of American

imperialism is not a breed apart from radical Islam, but is, in fact, "the mother of all fundamentalisms." Here Ali's otherwise admirable moral intuitions lead him astray.

As Ali notes in the book's opening chapters, where he offers a materialist reading of Islam's early development, Islam did buttress the economic and military expansion of the Arab world in the pre-modern period. Yet in the 20th and 21st centuries, Islam could hardly be said to abet an Arab version of imperialism. Indeed, after reading Ali's account, one is struck not by the uniform, but rather the multifaceted ideological functions of Islam and indeed by the difficulty of speaking as if there was one single Islam. Over the course of the last 100 years, Islam has functioned as an oppositional ideology, the legitimating creed for authoritarianism (like Saudi-Arabia or Iran), and most recently as the theological justification for murder. To reduce that complexity to the word imperialism is highly misleading. But the problem with Ali's basic assumptions goes deeper than that. His sees a moral equivalence in Islamic fundamentalism and America's imperialist democracy: to him, they are equally corrupt.

The problem with this conclusion is that it prevents us from seeing the differences that really matter. Even a democracy shot through with patriotic fervor and imperialist fundamentalism offers greater political freedoms and more varied opportunities

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: All books reviewed in *Punk Planet* are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to stick a CD in the player and write a snappy capsule. Please send all books to the reviews address listed in the front of the magazine.



for human flourishing than a non-democratic regime dominated by religious fundamentalism. Ali clearly subscribes to the values of the enlightenment and social justice. For better or worse, these values are most fully institutionalized in the liberal democracies of the West. Does this mean that these systems cannot be improved upon? *Of course not.* It is simply to say that, at the present moment, the opportunity to realize these values is greatest in liberal democratic systems. In some sense, this makes the corruption that does exist in the US that much more contemptible. It denies us an important good: more and better democracy. Religious fundamentalism, by contrast, is undesirable because of the threat it represents to democracy, not because it perverts something that is good to begin with. As much as progressives may want to believe the book's cover—a picture of a long-bearded George Bush in traditional Muslim garb—in doing so they risk losing the foundations for a politics of opposition rooted in democracy. Ali could not have written his book in a country where Islamic fundamentalism reigns. And that's something we need to remember. —John Brady

New York Is Now! The New Wave of Free Jazz

Phil Freeman

The Telegraph Company

New York Is Now! is the first work to give book-length treatment to some of the New York musicians who carried free jazz from its late-'60s heyday to its 1990s revival as the latest "new thing" for jaded rock heads to discover. And Phil Freeman—if you're willing to believe his self-promotion, is the jaded rock head who discovered this "new thing" and is bringing it to metal's masses in magazines like *Alternative Press*, *Magnet*, and *Metal Hammer*.

Arriving in stores months before the David S Ware Quartet took the festival stage to reinterpret Sonny Rollins's "Freedom Suite," *New York Is Now!* is either ahead-of-the-curve and historically important, as Freeman would have you believe, or a product puppy dog eager to capitalize on a growth market.

Passionate in its myopic focus on the Quartet, the book opens with the Ware's 1998 performance at the Vision Festival and closes with the Quartet's recording sessions for its 2001 release *Corridors & Parallels*. In between, we meet the group's principals—the book's first three artist profiles are devoted to Quartet members Ware, pianist Matthew Shipp, and bassist William Parker (not to mention that Freeman's table of contents damn near reproduces the back catalog of Aum Fidelity, the label of Quartet producer Steven Joerg). Contrast this limited range with the more catholic understandings of the music conveyed in Valerie Wilmer's *As Serious as Your Life* or AB Spellman's *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, and you understand why the latter are considered classics of jazz history, while the former is advertised on CD booklets from the label it lavishes with uncritical praise. Perhaps this is the kind of synergy Freeman's publishers, the new media Telegraph Company, encourage. But if Freeman recognizes a difference between writing promotional copy, jazz criticism, and his own coming-of-age story, there's little proof of it in this book.

As Freeman follows the Quartet's rise from underground sensation through major-label signing to the artistic achievement of *Corridors & Parallels* (others have been less kind to Shipp's use of synth on that album), the book also marks his progression from jazz outsider to insider. Arriving at the Vision Festival as a "neophyte" in the book's opening chapter, titled "What Happened to Me," Freeman is a guest inside the recording booth by book's end. We become his captive audience as he repudiates the "Lies Jazz Critics Told Me", constructs his counter-canon, and warns in the acknowledgments, "Those who wish to correct me should write their own books, and I will read them."

Larded onto this chronological progression is an argument that what jazz needs "to survive" is to reach out to a "new" avant-rock audience. It apparently never occurs to Freeman that if jazz survived long enough for him to discover it in the '90s, then rumors of its death might be exaggerated.

It also never occurs to him to give props to those who helped build the slide between rock and jazz long before Freeman slipped down it. Instead, he senselessly invests himself in New York's parochial turf battles, dissing John Zorn as "a dilettante" and "huckster," while club svengali Michael Dorff and "the Downtown 'new music' aesthetic" of his Knitting Factory is "clogged with indie-rock bands, art-rock holdovers, and postmodernist Jewish music." Their fault is booking less of the "hardcore free jazz" Freeman favors.

Never mind that such criticism makes no sense coming from a convert advocating the Great Rock Crossover; nor that the border between Downtown and the Lower East Side is neither as distinct—nor maintained by most musicians as fiercely—as Freeman would enforce it here. Dropping these disses as Bible truth (without going into detail to explain why these schisms formed) suggests the lie behind Freeman's claim "to have written this book in order to present honest information about free jazz to people . . . only passingly familiar with it." To read Freeman is to enter a universe where there is no *Wire* magazine, where Sonic Youth never played with the Sun Ra Arkestra. To read Freeman is to believe that the avatars of this movement are himself, the Ware Quartet, and Joerg, who formerly ran Homestead Records.

Freeman's inability to detach his writing from his attachment to his subjects marks this book as a fan biography, a common mode in the history of jazz writing. Fan bios play a vital role in documenting the work of underappreciated artists, but they usually view their subjects through the occluded lens of hero worship or whatever ideological investment the author has made in them. Fan bios become dangerous only when they present themselves to be objective histories, as Freeman does here. In the history of jazz writing—a field marked by exemplary writing and *Spirit Catchers* (a book that claims to analyze the spiritual dimensions of Coltrane's art)—Freeman has written the most annoying thing possible: a *Spirit Catcher* that thinks it knows better.

—Aaron Shuman ©

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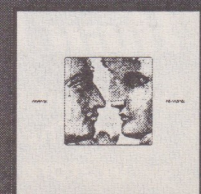
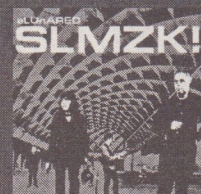
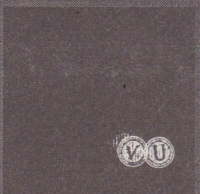
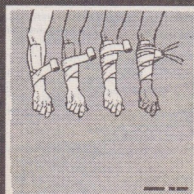
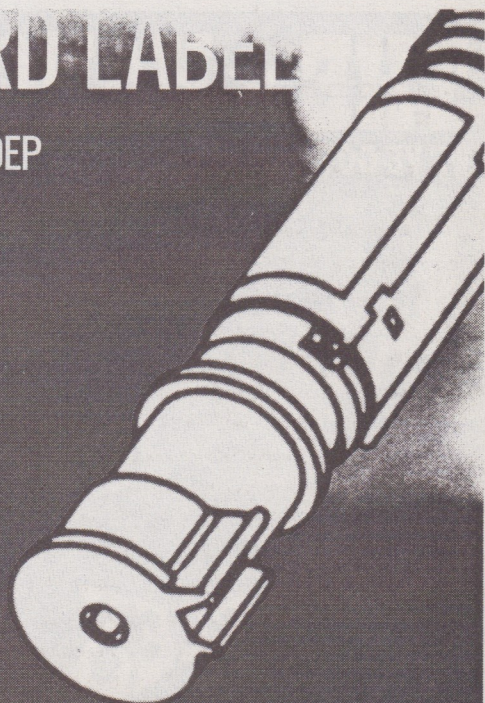
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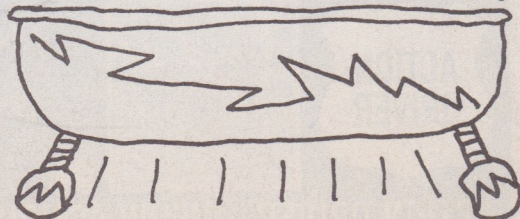
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PP43 BECOME THE MEDIA PP43's 36 page cover section gives readers DIY tips on how to edit digital video, how to set up a low-power radio station, how to record audio, how to program HTML, how to build a web-based audio feed, how to shoot video, how to program Flash animations and much, much more. In addition to those tips **BECOME THE MEDIA** also looks at the history of the **INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER**, who are setting the media world on end. **BECOME THE MEDIA** also features pieces about **YOUTH MEDIA**, the **ZAPATISTAS AND TECHNOLOGY**, **NEWSREEL**, and **COMMUNITY ACTIVIST TECHNOLOGY**. This issue is a must have for anyone interested in the new media revolution. Also featured in PP43 are interviews with radical historian **HOWARD ZINN**, rockers **ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT** (fresh off being dumped from a major label), "emo diaries" kingpin **DEEP ELM RECORDS**, author **SHAWNA KENNY**, who wrote **I WAS A TEENAGE DOMINATRIX**, laptop rocker **KID 606**, religious zealots **THE CAUSEY WAY**, and the masterminds behind the **PUPPET STREET PROJECT**. Additionally, PP43 features all the stuff readers have come to expect over the last seven years: columns, reviews, and much more. 144 pgs.

PP44 THE WEAKERTHANS, one of the finest punk outfits to come along in the last few years grace the cover of PP44. This interview, performed by longtime Punk Planet contributor Larry Livermore, probes the mind of Weakerthans frontman **JOHN SAMSON**. In their conversation, Livermore and Samson go from poetry to revolution and back again. Truly an engaging and inspiring talk with one of punk's newest heroes. Also interviewed in this issue: **MR LADY RECORDS** is profiled through talks with the label owners and the artists they release; futuristic hip-hop duo **DELTRON 3030**; Pacific Northwest metal punk **LORDS OF LIGHTSPEED**; electronic music pioneer **THOMAS DIMUZIO**; **HALF JAPANESE**'s legendary **JAD FAIR**; Pacific Northwest politi-rockers **THE INTIMA**; and \$5 CD label **PLAN-IT-X RECORDS**. Articles this issue include: **UNIVERSAL RECORD'S ACQUISITION OF E-MUSIC**—it may not sound all that

exciting, but this business-section errata finds many independent labels not so independent anymore; reporter Heather Haddon looks at the **ABUSE OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN AMERICA**; new associate editor Chris Ziegler gives a hilarious behind-the-scenes look at **SOUTH BY SOUTH-WEST**; PP investigates **SLAUGHTER OF WILD BUFFALO IN MONTANA**; and **PUNKS REMEMBER JOEY RAMONE** in a moving tribute. All this, plus all the DIY, columns, reviews, and much much much more! 144 pgs.

PP45 DOUBLE FEATURE cover story! This issue not only shines the spotlight on consumer-rights activist, 2000 presidential candidate, and all-around hellraiser **RALPH NADER**, but it also features an in-depth interview with uncompromising independents **SHELLAC**. Just for you, PP45 serves up a little double trouble—two cover stories for the price of one! Also interviewed in this issue: Latino punk entertainer **EL VEZ**; author **PLESANT GEHMAN**; analog electronic rockers **MOUSE ON MARS**; the new band to emerge from the ashes of Smart Went Crazy, **THE BEAUTY PILL**; queer zinemaker **RUDY SCUTTER**; filmmaker **STEPHANIE BLACK**; and death-penalty activist **STEVE EARL**. Articles in this issue include a hair-raising look at **THE YAZOO BACKWATER PUMP PROJECT IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA**—these pumps, if built, could bring environmental devastation to this fragile region; **BACK TO SHATILLA** follows author Ali Abunimah as he visits a Palestinian refugee camp; and **HONDURAS: THE OTHER COLUMBIA** looks at the US's secret involvement in the Honduran government's war against its own people. Plus columns, reviews, DIY and much, much more! 144 pgs.

PP46 ART & DESIGN 2! PP46 features **FOUR LIMITED EDITION COVERS** this time by artists **JAIME HERNANDEZ** (**LOVE & ROCKETS COMICS**), **SHEPARD FAIRY** (**OBEY GIANT POSTERS**), **NIKKI MCCLURE** (Olympia, WA paper-cut artist) and **JAY RYAN** (Chicago, IL poster artist). Interviews in **Art & Design 2** include Hernandez, Fairy, McClure, and Ryan along with filmmak-

er **SADIE SHAW**, designer **ELLIOT EARLES**, graffiti artists **JOCYLYN SUPERSTAR** and **LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE**, San Francisco's not-for-profit **POND GALLERY**, and **CRASS** collageist **GEE VAUCHER**. Articles in **A&D2** include a profile of **CHICAGO'S RADICAL STREET ARTISTS THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND LAND RECLAMATION**, an overview of **DIY COMICS**, a story about the **MURALS OF CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD**, and a look at the **PROJET MOBILVRE/BOOKMOBILE PROJECT** that is bringing zines and artist books into underserved neighborhoods. Plus reviews, columns, DIY and more. 168 pgs.

PP47 WAR SONGS. Punk Planet #47 takes stock of the Bush administration's **WAR AGAINST TERRORISM**. Is it effective? Is it moral? Is it legal? We pose the questions that the mainstream media isn't asking to experts—the answers are eye-opening to say the least. PP47 dedicates an entire section to looking at the war from many different angles in interviews, essays, and articles. Sure to be controversial, PP47 pulls no punches in its analysis of the war. But it's not just bombs and tanks in this issue of Punk Planet—after taking an issue off to write about art & design, PP47 returns with tons of great music interviews. Interviewed in this issue are: classic queer punk **TOM ROBINSON** reminisces on the spirit of '77; Pacific Northwest stalwarts **UNWOUND**; the Indigo Girls' **AMY RAY** talks about her independent solo project; dyke punks **THE HAGGARD** take their bikes out for a spin; buzz band **THURSDAY** drops some knowledge; **XBXR** gives their last interview; and Punk Planet helps **MINT RECORDS** celebrate their 10 year anniversary. Also interviewed just in time for the Olympics: the **BURN THE OLYMPICS** collective—a secretive group of activists devoted to direct action against the 2002 Olympic Games. In addition to the war coverage, and tons of interviews, PP47 features reviews, columns, fiction, DIY and more.

PP48 TO HELL AND BACK. Operating under the name George Eric Hawthorne, George Burdi was the flagbearer and general of the mid-

'90s neo-nazi youth movement. But a 1995 jail term found Burdi questioning his own beliefs, and when he was free, he left the neo-nazi movement. In "To Hell and Back", Punk Planet 48 catches up with Burdi to talk about his past, his transformation, and his future. Controversial and disturbing, yet ultimately moving, this feature-length interview is not to be missed! Also interviewed in this issue: the unstoppable women-led band **ERASE ERRATA**; garage rock genre jumpers **THE DIRTBOMBS**; electronic sound artist **OVAL**; Afro-beat radicals **ANTIBALAS**; street punk superstars **THE SWINGING UTTERS**; and radical educator and poet **DEMETRI MAR-TINEZ**. Any articles in PP48? You betcha. Punk Planet looks at the **DEATH OF DISTRIBUTION GIANT VALLEY** and what the loss of a giant one-stop means for independents. PP travels to look at the **FAILED DOLLARIZATION OF ECUADOR**; and Andrew Dickson talks about **TOURING WITH A DIY FILM**. Need more? How about a **DIY ON TRAVELLING AND WORKING ABROAD**, plus columns, reviews, and much, much more.

PP49 BUSINESS AS USUAL? THE ROCKY RISE OF VAGRANT RECORDS. Very few labels in the underground have had the meteoric success of California's Vagrant Records—nor the controversy that has come with it. In issue #49, Punk Planet turns its award-winning reporting to investigating Vagrant's business practices. Is the label's reputation for predatory band signings and larger-than-life marketing just sour grapes from competitors (as the label claims) or the emergence of a dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing (as its harshest critics contend)? And what does Vagrant's focus on Soundscan numbers, corporate sponsorships, and balls-out marketing campaigns mean for the underground? Reporters Trevor Kelley and Kyle Ryan (author of PP39's "The Crash" exposé on the 1994 punk signing boom) go beyond the rumors and delve into the fascinating story of the controversial punk label. **ALSO IN PP49**: Interviews with punk pioneers **MIKE WATT** and **RICHARD HELL**, rock 'n' rollers **FEDERATION X**, neo-wavers **THE RAP-TURE**, nobel laureate (no kidding!)

ADOLFO PEREZ, electronic underground mag **XL88R**, buzz band **NEW END ORIGINAL**, Brits **ELECTRELANE**, and the always entertaining **HOT WATER MUSIC**. Articles (besides the cover story) include the story of Alex Sanchez, a **LOS ANGELES GANG-PEACE ORGANIZER FACING DEPORTATION**; the story of **THE CIVIL SUIT AGAINST TWO SALVADORIAN GENERALS WHO NOW LIVE IN FLORIDA**; and a **FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF BEING "BANNED" FROM THE UNITED STATES POST-SEPTEMBER 11**. All this plus columns, DIY, reviews, and much, much more.

PP50: OUR KIND OF TOWN. Punk Planet marks its 50th issue with an issue that celebrates the magazine's home: Chicago. Featuring a diverse group of interviews and articles, PP50 showcases the many people, places, and things that make this city unique. To kick things off is the beautiful **JON LANGFORD PAINTING** of Chicago's Mayor Daley on the magazine's cover. Inside, Langford and bandmate Sally Timms wax philosophical about 25 YEARS OF THE MEKONS and what moving to Chicago has meant for the band. Also interviewed in this issue: post-rock poster darlings **TORTOISE** talk about why the critics got it all wrong; **BLOODSHOT RECORDS** explain the link between country and punk; the woman behind **VENUS ZINE** talks about creating her amazing publication; **LOS CRUDOS' MARTIN SOR-RODEGUY** talks about why he's left Chicago; **HOUSING ORGANIZER JAMES MUMM** talks about fighting gentrification; **GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE (AND PUNK) JASON FARMBMAN** talks about taking on Chicago machine politics; the two wonderful people behind **HOMOCORE CHICAGO** talk about the good old days; the braintrust behind the "dance show for kids of all ages" **CHIC-A-GO-GO** talk about making one of the best shows on cable access; death row inmate **AARON PATTERSON** talks about the brutal Chicago cop that beat him into confessing to a murder he didn't commit; indie hip-hoppers **THE MOLEMAN** drop some knowledge; and garage rockers **THE DISHES** make some noise. **PLUS MANY MORE INTERVIEWS WITH FOLKS FROM CHICAGO**. In addition, there's all the columns, reviews, DIYs, letters and

everything else you've come to expect for 50 issues.

Punk Planet #51 steers the car head-on into oncoming controversy with the emotional cover story, **WAVE A WHITE FLAG: DODGING BULLETS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK**. In this moving first-hand account, author and frequent PP contributor Jeff Guntzel (PP50's Salim Muwakkil interview, **We Owe You Nothing's** Noam Chomsky interview) travels to the West Bank. Dodging bullets and checkpoints (in fact, Jeff ends up arrested at one point), Jeff and a small team of dogged activists end up being the first Americans into the Jenin refugee camp after the Israeli Defense Forces leveled it. A truly heartbreaking story told with great empathy for both sides, Jeff's account is not to be missed. There's a ton more don't-miss material in this issue of Punk Planet including Mark Andersen's (co-author of the DC punk history book **Dance of Days**) unique interview with **BRATMOBILE'S ALLISON WOLFE** and **BLUEGRASS LEGEND HAZEL DICKENS**—these two women from different backgrounds and different eras discover just how much they have in common. Also interviewed in PP51: **AARON COMETBUS**'s amazing zine turns 20; **EPITAPH RECORDS' CHIEF BRETT GUREWITZ** talks about his drug addiction, re-joining Bad Religion and learning to love life again; rocker and all-around amazing woman **SARAH DOUGHER**; Billy Joe Armstrong's **ADELIN RECORDS**; truly insane rockers **GUYANA PUNCH LINE** bring the noise; queer punk **ANDREW MARTINI (LIMPWRIST, KILL THE MAN WHO QUESTIONS)**; and much more. Articles in PP51 (in addition to Jeff's amazing account) include a profile of **TRANSGENDERED ACTIVIST AND ARTIST ED VARGA**; **THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL SYSTEM**; and an account of the **STRUGGLES OF DAY LABORERS IN CHICAGO**. Plus, many of Punk Planet's columnists say goodbye.

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Chris Dodge's Street Librarian:
www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/7423

Katia Roberto's Diary of a Mad Cataloger:
<http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~kroberto/home.htm>

As one might expect, all of these sites have extensive links to even more rad librarian info.

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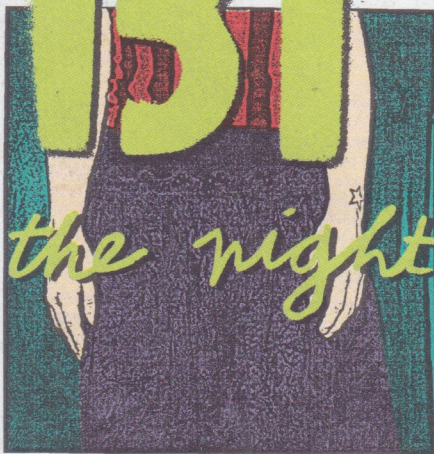


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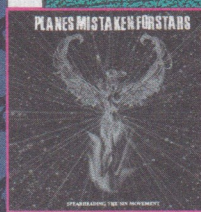
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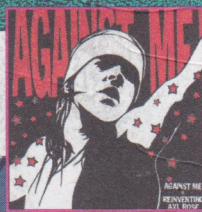
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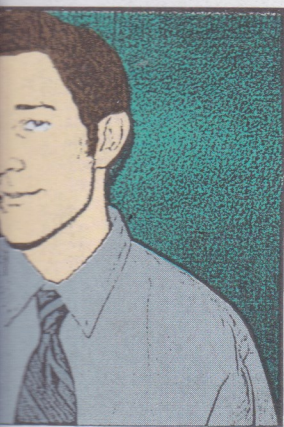
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